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**Seeking God**

# **The Franciscan**



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# The Society of Saint Francis

**Protector of the Society :** The Bishop of New York

**Minister General :** Brother Geoffrey S.S.F.

## THE FIRST ORDER OF THE S.S.F. EUROPEAN PROVINCE

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*Pax et bonum.*

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### **S. FRANCIS DAY IN OXFORD**

A Eucharist to celebrate the feast of S. Francis will be held in  
S. MARY MAGDALEN'S CHURCH, OXFORD

WEDNESDAY, 4th OCTOBER, 1978, at 7.30 p.m.

followed by coffee and an informal get-together

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*Anyone interested in the relevance of S. Francis of Assisi for today, or in the work of the Society of S. Francis, is warmly invited to come.*

### **COMMUNION WAFERS**

The Community of S. Clare is able to take a few more orders  
for large and small communion wafers

*Please address enquiries to :—*

**The Wafer Room Sister**

**Community of S. Clare**

**S. Mary's Convent**

**Freeland**

**Oxford OX7 2AJ**

or telephone (0993) 881225 between 12.10 and 1.00 p.m. or  
4.00 and 4.45 p.m.

### **BLACK CASSOCKS**

The Bursar at Hilfield Friary would like to acknowledge an anonymous gift received from a friend in the Salisbury district. He would also like to say that we can always use black cassocks for the use of our postulants, and indeed would welcome such second-hand gifts in either good or repairable condition.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS AT THE WELSH HOUSE

*From left to right: Silyn, Nathanael, Gwenfryd Mary,  
Barry Alban (now moved to Hilfield), Gabriel, Raphael,  
Jannafer, Vincent.*







## Seeking God



THE Rule of S. Benedict counsels that aspirants be asked 'What do you seek?' The answer is 'I seek God'. The question can be asked of others too. For some the answer in terms of God will be difficult ; for others both question and answer incomprehensible. For

others again the answer 'I seek God' will come so easily that it may fail to carry weight ; they will seem too sure that they have found him. Writing of Evelyn Underhill, Charles Williams (in the Introduction to her letters) says : 'The equal (or all but equal) swaying level of devotion and scepticism, which for some souls is as much the Way as continuous simple faith is for others, was a distress to her . . . she wanted to be *sure*'.

Finding our direction, our true faith may take a life-time or more ; we are lucky if we have a sense of being found even while we seek. There are some clear Christian guidelines, some excellent directors (too few, alas) and some places 'where prayer has been valid'. If at times the search takes us into the labyrinthine paths of our own personalities, the experience of others may give us hope. Some warnings about 'garden paths' can also help.

The story is told of a little boy who ran to his father (a Jewish Rabbi) in floods of tears. Taking him on his knee his father asked what was the trouble. Between the sobs came 'It was awful, Daddy : we were playing hide and seek. They hid and I searched and searched and at last found them. Then I hid. I waited, but—oh it was awful !—they never came and then I found them playing another game'. 'It is awful', said the father, who now was weeping himself. 'We hide from the great God, but he comes and searches for us among the trees of the garden. But if he hides from us, we go and play another game'.

Both the Jewish and the Christian Traditions know a God who seeks. 'Adam, where are you?'. 'Zaccheus, come down'. What games are we playing—or is our seeking genuine ? Jesus said, 'Seek and you will find'.

## The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

The subject of this volume of THE FRANCISCAN has prompted me to write about our Tertiaries in Asia who are scattered in Hong Kong, Singapore and Sarawak, and Calcutta. For some time these countries have appeared on my itinerary and some may wonder why I visit these places so often, especially as there are no First Order Brothers there. Gradually over the years we are witnessing the birth of the Third Order in Asia. As far as India is concerned it may be said to be a re-birth, for there was the Christa Prema Seva Sangha with its Third Order many years ago. Indeed, Miss Olga Laurence now in Auckland was a Tertiary in Poona and celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her profession last year. May we not see this as an incipient thirst for the Gospel life on the part of at least a few people in these lands? I see my own contribution as a sharing with the people of these countries the things of the Franciscan life which to me have been most precious, and which have been the inspiration of my own life.

My annual visits, then, to these parts of Asia have been for the purpose of stimulating and nurturing the growth of the small Third Order seed which has been planted there. In Hong Kong, that great concrete jungle of more than four million, which is seen as a part of China, and which is largely sustained by China, we have at present two Third Order novices and a few Companions, and this year we discovered quite a lot of interest among both Chinese and Europeans, and we hope an indigenous Franciscan group will take root there in time.

In Singapore, with a population of two and a half million, there is a more solid group consisting of three professed Tertiaries, one novice and one postulant, and in Sarawak we have one veteran Tertiary, Canon Eric Scott, and two Dayak postulants in Kuching. Again the indications are that this group will develop.

In Calcutta, a city of about nine million, we have just one novice and one postulant, but here also we are hopeful that others will feel called to the Third Order. It is an added encouragement that Brother Don of the American Province of the First Order is to have six months in Calcutta living and working with the Missionary Brothers of Charity who work closely with Mother Teresa and her Sisters. Don hopes to



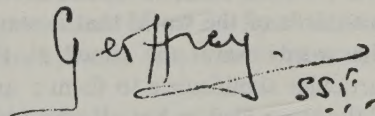
arrive there in August, and after completing his six months to have a further time in Hong Kong.

We are speaking of small numbers. The Christian Church in these lands is tiny and the Anglican Church even tinier. Anglican Religious Communities are non-existent apart from the Brothers and Sisters of the Epiphany in Calcutta, so that the idea of the disciplined life of a religious community and vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are entirely foreign. However, the appeal and the relevance of S. Francis is apparent, and it is a joy to me to introduce S. Francis to them not as an historical figure of the past but as a living reality today.

There is no possibility of starting a branch of the First Order in Calcutta or Singapore as white brothers would not be able to enter these countries on a permanent basis and would be seen as western missionaries. But the Third Order is indigenous from the start. Who knows, maybe one day vocations to the First Order may flower there. But I do commend to your prayers these men and women who are seeking God, who are dissatisfied with their Christian life as they live it, and who are seeing in the way of S. Francis a means of fulfilling their vocation as Christians in a greater measure and enriching their spiritual experience. Let us also be mindful of what they are giving us. For the first time we have brothers and sisters in our Third Order who are nationals of these countries of Asia, and this enriches and broadens our own spirituality. Thus the Third Order becomes something that it never was before.

As our Society grows so does our responsibility. May we always respond fully to all that God is requiring of us.

With my love and prayers,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey', followed by a horizontal line and the letters 'SSF'.

*Minister General.*

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### ***Crib Figures***

The Hilfield Friary set has come to the end of its life. Anyone who has a set to give or lend, would they please let us know.

## Chronicle

*Brother Michael writes :*

**EUROPEAN PROVINCE** Summer is the season of Conferences and Chapter meetings. At the time of writing the General Synod has just finished and the Lambeth Conference is about to begin, with no doubt far reaching conclusions and consequences for our Church. On a more personal level I was involved in a conference of Roman Catholic Superiors, and shortly after that shared in the Chapter of the Brothers of the First Order in Brisbane. From those two meetings there are two abiding recollections which appeared significant for our Society at the present time.

The Religious Superiors were debating the political and social involvement of their Orders in the life of the world. There were, for instance, moving accounts of the way in which the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits—make their Christian witness in Latin America and the Far East while retaining their integrity—often at the cost of their lives. During one long discussion about social involvement in the Third World there was a sudden violent intervention from a young priest who knew from personal experience the conditions in such places. ‘Your cry is a cry without suffering. Caught in your cultural background ; caught in your capitalism ; how can you read the Gospel as a poor person ?’.

How indeed ? How can a rich man—rich in any way, materially, educationally, spiritually—actually capture the sound of the Voice behind the Word when he reads the Gospel, the good news for all mankind, the majority of which lives in a poverty we can hardly imagine or under a repression and violence we have never experienced ? And how can we understand how it sounds in the ears of that other two-thirds of the world that is starved of food, or truth, or freedom ? The words were not aimed at Franciscans yet they should be of particular significance to them ; and not only the brothers and sisters of the three Orders but all who identify themselves with us by reading this magazine. How *does* the Gospel sound to a poor person ? The remark remains like a permanent pebble in my shoe, and challenges the moral and spiritual poverty of the affluent world in which I live.

Which brings me to the second significant incident. The Chapter in Brisbane was not only necessary for the continued cohesion of our Community now so widely spread throughout the world, but reflected



a concern that a small brotherhood which has become both international and inter-racial should value those links by which it can recognise and live out its unity of purpose and ideal. This Chapter acknowledged afresh the debt we owe to 'The Principles'; the one document adopted by all three Orders of the Society of Saint Francis—which also has members in the Third World.

It was written in India as a 'Rule' for the Christa Seva Sangha and is now incorporated with the other Franciscan Rules in a book which has been compiled for the brothers and sisters as the Source Documents for the living tradition of the Society. Three former members of that Indian Franciscan brotherhood are still with us. 'The Principles' were brought into the S.S.F. by Father Algy when he joined up with Brother Douglas forty years ago.

A careful reading of it reveals that, in spite of the sophistication of their cultural western background, those first brothers in India had a real understanding of the world in which they had come to live and a Franciscan longing to read the Gospel as a poor person. To read it through Indian eyes. Even the opening words suggest the spiritual attitudes of India. 'Jesus the Master speaks'. A 'Master' in India is not just a religious leader or theologian but one whose own life has been completely mastered and disciplined by the truth, and he instructs those who turn to him out of the depths of his own contemplation of the truth. When 'The Principles' talk of 'the path of renunciation' it uses language which, familiar to us, is also familiar to the followers of Eastern religions as well. Again it says 'They will rejoice in God's world, its beauty and its living creatures, calling nothing common or unclean', a phrase which strikes as much to our world, where class can be as cruel as caste is in India. To recognise that we owe a permanent debt to a Franciscan brotherhood in India which had so short a life might help us towards a new freedom of the Spirit to leave behind as rich a source of inspiration when we too have lived out our little day.

One sign of spiritual strength will be marked this year by the absence of Aelred's name from our Intercession list. Though technically a member of the Society he has for many years been living the strictly enclosed life of a Cistercian monk at Ewell Monastery. His foundation has now been given official recognition. The integrity and simple determination which marks the life of Aelred and his brothers is a matter for gratitude to God and a true enrichment of the Religious

life in our Church. The close links of love we have with him could never be broken. We rejoice with him.

Our own Provincial Chapter was the longest and most thorough in my experience. We were privileged to elect eight brothers to life vows and three to first vows. A few days later three novices were clothed at Hilfield. Details will be found elsewhere in this edition. I must however mention our happiness that amongst them all are Wulfram and Petro who will be the two first African brothers to make their life commitment ; Antonio who came to us from Japan : three of them are from Southern Africa, and two of the novices came through the Friary in Belfast. In such a way perhaps does God suggest a new presence of His reconciling Spirit springing out of the waste places of the world. 'The Principles' concludes 'It is the purpose of Christ to work miracles through men, and if his servants will be emptied of self and utterly surrendered to him they will become chosen vessels of his mighty working, who is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think'. For them, and for us all, that is surely a challenge for the future.

*From Hilfield, Brother Bernard writes :*

Ivor Smith-Cameron, the Canon Missioner of Southwark, spoke with remarkable simplicity and force at our Summer Festival on 1 July. Everyone was enormously appreciative of the challenge to dynamic and total Christianity. Nor did the reputation of the English as the most hardy celebrators of summer festivals in winter conditions suffer any tarnish. Everyone sat out the cold and sang in the rain, and said that they had enjoyed it. We enjoyed it because we found that we were able to work together as a team, and because the gardens (thanks to Brian Thomas and David Stephen, in particular, and lots of others in general) looked really good and because the kitchen brothers came up trumps, craftily serving the rock buns solidly to begin with and then delighting people with the odd eclair. One of the new novices said that he liked it because it was not too 'hat and glove-y'.

### **New Recruits**

The Summer Festival followed hard on the clothing of three new novices. Michael and Damian were here for that and it was a powerful and moving event. We are very thankful to have Philip Bartholomew, Howard Columba and Peter William in our noviciate and wish them well. There are others soon to replace them as postulants. The first came in July, James O'Neil and four more should be with us in time to help with the dispatching of this Franciscan. By the way on that, there has been the odd occasion when someone has had a reminder slip with their Franciscan either when they have recently renewed or when they reckon they are still in credit anyway. May we apologise for this and say that if it should happen to you the best way is to ignore it ; or (more cheekily, may I say) would you please check first and if it is our mistake then ignore it !



### Widdecombe Fair

We go to press with this issue before our major summer events, the camps and conferences, to which we are looking forward. The terraced field above the Friary makes a beautiful site and already this year we have had some unforgettable times with our camping friends there. The Battersea camp was one such. The camp fire under the setting sun ; Alan Wipple letting fly with 'Widdecombe Fair' and Richard with the 'Music Man'; then the guitars and the modern songs of renewal and finally Compline quietly there in the darkness. The days of that camp were in really hot sun ; we hope the same for August.

### Broken Glass

We continue to have large groups visiting us for the day ; the last of them was from Hartcliffe, Bristol, where Brian Thomas had been for Holy Week ; another was a group from Cerne Abbas in a 'search for your supper' event, a sort of treasure hunt which brought one hundred people here eventually. Gordon has had a group of Somerset County Youth leaders and the Youth Club from Preston Road. Once they get over the shock of our not being a mediaeval monastery or a red brick building with a high wall topped with broken glass, most people enter quickly into the joy and beauty of this place and certainly we get very kind letters afterwards.

### Limitations

We get many letters asking if we can take people in need to stay with us. They are sometimes emotionally disturbed people or being considered for parole from prison, or seriously handicapped. We are thankful to say that we can occasionally say yes to these requests—perhaps one out of ten—but people who are thinking of writing should know that it is only rarely that we have a vacancy. I very much wish that we could do more, for it is a good place for people to come for a respite (as the many letters in the guestmaster's file testify) ; of course, people who want a supportive environment while they get back to work can't really be helped, because this part of Dorset offers very few job opportunities and we can't provide daily transport to work anyway.

### Fishy Stories

Kenneth and Matthew went up to Westminster Abbey to represent us at the Service in July for the Prison Service ; Owen is going to some of his old stamping grounds in East London and taking Philip with him ; with holidays there is a lot of coming and going. We hitch quite a bit ; a car stopped on the A303 at 8.45 a.m. as the brother had got out of the Friary car near Sherborne ; by 1 p.m., in two lifts, he was in the Canterbury House. I did a round thirty hour trip to Richmond and Oxford for the cost of 40p. Gordon does a lot of hitching too, and was recently in Brixton and Battersea and Walthamstow again as well as a trip up to Runcorn in the Liverpool diocese. I am going up to York for the General Synod, but am thankful that Jack Bradshaw (well known to some as a Governor of Hooke School) is taking me. Hitch-hiking stories are like fishing stories, so I won't go on. But did you hear the one about . . .

### Oriental Calm

One brother that has no chance of hitching home for his holidays is Antonio who joined us here recently and who is taking his life vows on the 31 July with

Brian Thomas. His parents live in Japan. We are very thankful for the quiet beauty that he brings to our life ; it is especially noticeable in the Chapel, where he is the Sacristan ; he is due to stay with us until November. Another brother who came from afar was Stephen Lambert, much loved by many in this Friary for a long time. We were delighted that he paid us a visit before leaving for the Solomons, having now left Tanzania. Among our other visitors who have brought us a great deal, is Canon John Townroe. He comes about twice a year, sometimes to give lectures (he is coming in November to give a series on the Incarnation) and also to be available for interviews and confessions. Several brothers said after his last visit how terrific it had been. Our life here provides many opportunities of growth into greater reality and wholeness and it is of inestimable value to have a wise and skilled counsellor to help the process.

### **Novice Training**

Novice training, which is an important part of our agenda, is carried on both by active involvement in the work of the Friary and in the community relationships which are the warp and weft of our life, and also in the lectures, seminars, projects and visits which are arranged. Although the period that I have been here has coincided with a thinner period numerically (a situation which we expect to be ended by the time you read this) and consequently the work has been rather too prominent an ingredient of the life, there has nevertheless been a steady programme of lectures and the like. Keith co-ordinates the programme and we have been glad to welcome Edward and Harold among our visiting teachers. The courses are on prayer and worship, on the Bible and doctrine, on the religious life and S.S.F. as well as an assortment like comparative religion and human development. At the end of the summer term, the novices arranged their own project with the novices from Compton Durville, one day there and one day here. It seems to have been a very worthwhile exercise indeed. We were glad to welcome Sister Joyce the new novice guardian, to our Chapel where she gave a memorable homily on S. Barnabas Day. We enjoy all our friendships with our sisters at Compton and are glad that S.S.F. includes such opportunities of complementarity. I'm sure that Keith and those who helped him pitch the marquee for the Compton festival were particularly aware of this. We are able to send a priest each week for the Sunday Eucharist there.

### **Mission**

In September I am going to speak at the Communities' Consultative Council about the mission aspect of the religious life. The Lord not only calls us to be with him and to have fellowship with his people, but he also sends us to do the work of the kingdom. This autumn all the novices are taking part in mission. Keith is leading two, Angelo one, Bernard another and so on. Though the Society gets many more requests than it can accept, we are able to undertake quite a good deal of such work. A different sort of mission is a long weekend visit to the Portland Borstal when the novices live the life of a Borstal boy as completely as possible.

### **Expertise**

There is always a great deal of maintenance work to do on the buildings here, and so we are delighted that Andrew David has been spared to spend eight weeks here to bring his expertise to bear. We hope that Philip will follow him at the job.



Two tradesmen have recently stayed with us for a holiday and given us their services ; such help is greatly appreciated. Those who know our swimming pool here will be glad to know that Howard has been using his expertise on it and we eagerly wait to see if he will triumph and, if so, whether it will be warm enough to swim. Expertise of a different kind, in the person of Mary Creedy (Fraser), the talented sculptress from Brisbane, has come (by a series of extraordinary circumstances) to live near the friary here. She and Arthur are both in the Third Order and are living at Mary Deane's farm ; Mary made her profession as a tertiary recently, at the large and happy Third Order area meeting. She is good to us in many ways, not least in enabling Patrick to have a rest there sometimes. He, by the way, has delighted us all, not to mention himself, by passing the driving test on the mini which has been provided for him. Incidentally we have a silly goose here who assuages her loneliness by admiring her reflection in the cars parked in the car park here. One day she is blue, another red ; she has a friend to talk to, at least until the car drives off ; silly goose. Later : alas, the fox got her.

### Solid Meat

As I write, some of the brothers from other houses are here for retreat, which Bill Lash is conducting, rather at short notice. We have several groups in for this kind of activity ; there is a Third Order priests' retreat in the autumn. Several have asked whether we shall be running the School of Prayer this autumn, like those that Jonathan and Bill ran so successfully last year. I think that we had better leave it now until next year, but we shall be glad when we can offer people the opportunities for growth in this aspect of being a Christian. The Bible is of immense value in building up Christians in the faith. Whenever there is a new book beginning in the lectionary for the daily offices, we have a brief exposition of it ; Richard on Daniel, Bill on Joshua, Bernard on Ezekiel, Matthew on Matthew have appeared on the menu of late. We wish all our readers good eating.

### *From Belfast, Brother Kevin writes :*

Being the only Anglican Franciscans in the whole of Ireland it was a real privilege to be invited to join other members of the Franciscan family for a conference called *Franciscans Together* held in Co. Galway, 3 to 5 June. What a great welcome we had. We joined our brothers and sisters in everything and they were so terribly interested in our Society at large and in our work in Belfast. They were eager to learn from us but what a lot we had to learn from them !

Five excellent papers were presented to us, the titles being—*The Gospel is Power ; The Conversion of S. Francis as a Manifestation of Gospel Power ; How Does the Franciscan Experience this Power ? ; The Power of the Gospel at Work in a Franciscan and Witnessing to the Power of the Gospel by Franciscan Living*. After each of these papers we went into groups and there we really came to the basics of real Franciscan living. There was so much openness and love and a deep desire to make the weekend a truly enriching and deepening experience. We would never be the same again. Now new friendships have been made and old ones consolidated and our tiny Franciscan presence here in Belfast is suddenly a very real part of that larger Franciscan family dotted all over Ireland. Truly the Gospel power was in action at *Franciscans Together* and what took place must have gladdened the heart of our founder and patron.

*And from Williamson House in Belfast, Brother Eric writes :*

During a very enjoyable weekend at S. Francis School recently, I was presented with a copy of the school magazine entitled 'Reflections 78' in which I read the following : ' It is a wonderful thing to have a mother. Other people can love you but only your mother understands you. To be there when she is needed most. But the only wrong thing she ever does is to die and leave you '.

That made me aware again how lucky I am to have a loving, caring mother. But here at Williamson House things are very different. Out of our twenty children, fourteen of them have never known a mother's love or met their mothers. The other six are brothers and sisters who have not lived with their mothers for many years and may never do so in the future. I wonder what they think about mothers. The little ones will not even know what a mother is. It is a funny thing that fathers' day goes by without any fuss : no cards or presents, but I can guarantee I get at least seven cards on mothers' day ! Yes, we can provide most things in a Home, but would it not be nice if we could provide mothers ? If any reader would like any information about fostering or adopting, please do not hesitate to contact your local social services department for further information.

We have had an exciting year, major structural alterations have been made to the house to provide us with more room : the older children now have single rooms and I have flat accommodation. Molly, our cook, needs a medal because in spite of walls coming down and dust everywhere she managed to keep us fed. The younger residents rather enjoyed kicking bricks around the *inside* of the house.

The Williamson House Friendship Group finally took possession of our new mini-bus after a year's hard fund-raising. We had tremendous support from our local Rotary Club and Inner Wheel and without their help we would still be slogging away raising money. Now that we are mobile I wonder how we managed without our wheels. Ireland is a beautiful country and we have many favourite haunts for picnics, but the beach remains the favourite. Our next goal is camping.

*From Glasshampton, Brother Alban writes :*

Brother Antonio, having returned from Japan, was with us for only a short time before going to the Birmingham house, and then to Hilfield. Brother Andrew David has also left us for Hilfield. However, our two senior stalwarts remain, John and Lawrence Christopher, each making his own distinctive contribution to the life of the house. Brother John, on the garden, has been menaced by the increasing rabbit population, and anti-rabbit barricades have been going up. A makeshift inner fence around the brassicas seemed to indicate that the garden brothers were ready for a last ditch stand against the invaders. Brother Lawrence continues to call us to prayer with the ringing of the bell, while also being host to our numerous guests and visitors.

The latter do not appear on quite the scale expected at, say, Hilfield, but the house is in regular use for times of retreat or quiet, and some parties of visitors come for an evening, ending with Compline. The usual clergy quiet days have also been happening, one, for the Bridgnorth Deanery, being conducted by our Bishop Protector. The quiet atmosphere of the day was unfortunately interrupted by one of the participants being taken suddenly ill, but his brethren nobly looked after



him and carried on. Another quiet day, for the Droitwich Deanery, was conducted by Bishop John's assistant, Bishop Mark Wood.

Methodists and Baptists have been included among our visitors, as well as a Buddhist bhikkhu (English, but having spent five years in Thailand). The bhikkhu, in his saffron robes, met Bishop Bill Lash, who was with us at the time, in a flashily coloured shirt brought back from Tanzania ! Bishop Bill was paying one of his regular visits to give his course on Eastern Spirituality, to the novices here. James Butterworth, from Dudley, continues to come at intervals and give valuable help in novice training.

During the summer, Brothers Crispin and John Francis have been holding the kitchen fort, while Brothers Victor John and Adam have been supporting Brother John in the garden, as well as Brother Albert when he can spare time from the laundry. In between this activity the quiet life of prayer goes on, and it is good that this is appreciated by so many who come to stay.

*From Alnmouth, Brother Jonathan writes :*

#### Visitors

I am writing these notes on one of those rare, hot summer days—at least rare in the North East this year ! But the weather certainly has not deterred the large number of visitors who have found their way to the Friary. There have been many groups, mostly from parishes or schools, and we are looking forward to quite a few more during the course of the year. It is interesting to note how many parish priests want to bring their P.C.C.'s out to the Friary for a day of prayer, discussion and worship. We hope that this ministry will increase in the months ahead as indeed we all get a lot from the school and parish visits that seem to be an increasing part of our life.

There have been a number of distinguished visitors this summer. On Ascension Day, the Bishop of Durham spent the day with us, giving us a lot to think about. Then in mid-June Bishop Michael Ramsay came to conduct the community retreat and shared so much of himself with us that we all felt 'lifted up' and inspired by his humility and ordinariness. At the end of the month, the Archbishop of York came for twenty-four hours and led us in an excellent Bible Study to name but one of the many things he did for us.

Several of us went to the Haddington Pilgrimage in May and together with our brothers in Edinburgh made a sizeable Franciscan contingent. One of the happy things recently instituted—and there are others !—is to invite the local clergy into the Friary for the eucharist and lunch afterwards. It seems to have been much appreciated by the clergy and gives us a chance to get to know them better.

Cecil continues with his ministry at Barndale School which is even more important at a time of change in the school. We had a beautiful afternoon in May when the children came to tea at the Friary. On a local level, we are very happy that Marcus is going to re-start the link with Acklington Prison. He will be going into the prison for the afternoon once a week. Acklington Prison is going to become in time a very big prison with over eight hundred prisoners and a large Y.P. wing and we are glad to be involved in the work there with Father Alan Craig, the new Chaplain.

Like every Friary we rely very heavily on local support and interest and in the last few months have welcomed as part of our family John Falcus, a retired auditor, who is helping us with our financial business. His weekly visits are very much part of the scene now but we would all like to record to him through THE FRANCISCAN how grateful we are.

Our links with Newcastle are deepening with two parishes in particular. At S. Michael's, Byker, where Murray Haig and his wife Deborah are Novice Tertiaries, there is a very happy to-ing and fro-ing ! Early in July two young men of the congregation there were admitted as Companions at the Friary and both Derek and Graham have made several visits to the Parish in the last few months. The brothers spent a very exciting and happy day at S. Michael's in April and in September we look forward to a quiet day for S. Michael's at the Friary. Rufus and his team shared in a mission to Saint Martin's, Byker which by all accounts seems to have gone very well. Certainly a lot of new friendships have been made and visits to the Friary from members of S. Martin's are becoming a regular part of our life. I had the privilege of preaching in the cathedral at the end of May and Rufus took part in the all-night youth vigil at the cathedral the night before our Summer Festival.

We said a sad goodbye to Adam and Albert in May as they left for Glasshampton having given a great deal to the life here. We miss them very much. Derek seems to get better and better and more and more active. We are very grateful for the many people who have prayed for him and indeed still do so. In September, Derek will be celebrating his Silver Jubilee as a priest—we all rejoice with him at this milestone. He is in heavy demand for preaching and other evangelistic work and we are very happy that he is able to do so much. Jerome continues to do many things at the Friary—his primary responsibility is looking after the wayfarers who come to us, which he does with great compassion and care. He also has a number of contacts in the locality particularly with the Social Services. In May a very interesting conference was held at the Friary for clergy and social workers in the area. Another conference is planned for the autumn.

The re-painting continues. The new conference room-cum-guest common room is now completed which together with that part of the guest wing makes a very relaxing and refreshing atmosphere for guests and visitors. The guest wing should be completed by the end of August. We shall attack the main corridor and staircase of the house, and then the refectory. If we can manage to do all that by Christmas we shall be very pleased.

The Open Day was greatly blessed—over five hundred people came ; it was a cross between a giant picnic and a Pilgrimage ! The weather was uncertain to begin with and so the mass was in the chapel relayed to hundreds outside. In the afternoon ; Christopher Spafford and Jonathan were the main speakers ; with brief speeches made by Mr. Alan Beith, M.P., our local member of parliament and the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne. Tea followed and then Evensong was said in the garden—so ending a happy if tiring day.

I have asked Graham if he will be responsible for looking after the Companions in this area and a short meeting of Companions was held at Alnmouth during the Open Day. We are planning a Companions' Day in November. If there are any



Companions in the North East who would like to know about future events or to meet Graham, then please let the brothers at Alnmouth know.

We have begun to make contact with other Religious in the area. The C.H.N. Sisters from Jesmond spent a day at Alnmouth early in July and we hope to make a reciprocal visit in the autumn. The Sisters of Charity working in the Durham Diocese have also made contact with us and we look forward to greater fellowship together in the future. An ecumenical prayer group of Catholic and Anglican Religious has begun in Newcastle once a month and we hope to play our part in that as well.

So we look forward to the autumn and winter. The biggest event in the autumn is the Rally at S. John's, Newcastle on Saturday, 21 October. The Bishop will preside at the Eucharist and Brother Michael will celebrate. In the afternoon, the Bishop of Jarrow and Brother Michael will speak. We hope that many of our friends in the North East will join us as we celebrate Saint Francis-tide—a bit late !

We hope by Christmas to be able to circulate a list of events for next year at the Friary—those on our mailing list will receive a copy ; if you know of others who would like to be informed of our activities then please let us know.

*From Compton Durville, Sister Teresa writes :*

A casual visitor to the countryside generally returns to the city filled with a deep sense of peace. The mown fields, the sheep gathered for dipping, the fruit ripening on the trees all combine to dispel anxiety, and give a sense of belonging, and of sharing in a life which has changed only in technique over the centuries. A convent set in the heart of the countryside is vividly aware of these things, but even more aware of the underlying tensions of the farmer fighting against weather, disease and rising prices.

A casual visitor to a Convent likewise exclaims 'Ah ! What peace !' and is totally unaware of the struggles of family life which spring largely from perpetually trying to make an inch go a yard, and a quart fit into a pint pot !

At Compton we have had very many visitors during the year, all trying to get away from the pressures of daily life to a place where they can be themselves, with time to ponder and relax, an environment in which they can confer and discuss with their friends, or be still enough to hear God. This seems to be being asked of us more and more, and we rejoice insofar as we are able to provide this opportunity and space. Our more recent visitors have included a group of solicitors who wanted to come for the weekend to share our life, and probably gave us very much more than we gave them.

Bridget Upton from New Zealand was admitted as a Postulant in June. She has a degree in Agricultural Science so quickly felt at home in the gardening scene at Compton Durville. Sister Catherine Joy returns from America in July, and Sister Alison returns in August. It is expected that Sister Hilary will spend some time in San Francisco from September, and Mother and Sister Bridget will also be visiting that House in the autumn being the delegates from this Province to the First Order Sisters' Chapter to take place in San Francisco in November.

Our Open Day was a very happy occasion, and we are grateful to the Essex Companions who once more did so much to help in the garden beforehand. We

had more volunteers than beds (not flower beds !) so unfortunately had to say 'No' to some.

The Novices enjoyed a shared project with the Brothers recently though in the end only three were able to participate ; Pauline being at Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Susan helping out in Birmingham.

*From Liverpool, Brother Edgar writes :*

In THE FRANCISCAN published last January, we expressed the hope that our good relationships with the industrial mission would be maintained, with Brother Ronald as our chief contributor. We are happy to report that this hope is being fulfilled. Apart from a continuation of contacts already established, Brother Cuthbert has been invited to join the mission team and will be working part-time as a full member of it.

Again in January, we spoke of the discontinuation of our work at Thingwall Hall. However, Brother Harry has continued to work there as a care-assistant and we value the keeping of this contact with the Brothers of Charity. We were recently all invited to the thanksgiving mass and dinner on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the profession of Brother Oswin C.F.C., which was a very happy day.

Brother James William is now exercising his healing ministry in S. Anne's Church, Stanley, and prayer groups are taking place once a month. He is also becoming part of the parochial ministry there, doing hospital chaplaincy work and parish visiting.

At home, there is much colour in the garden, due more to the planting of Brother David Stephen than to the watering of the present guardian !

*From Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sister Eileen Mary writes :*

Brothers, sisters, tertiaries, companions and friends, about two hundred people altogether, were welcomed to our Garden Party. We had a eucharist, listened to talks and an ecumenical group called 'Tapestry' and generally enjoyed the sun, the garden and each others company. How lucky we were in choosing the day—the saints from Stone very kindly loaned and erected their large tent, we should have needed it on any of the Saturdays since.

Earlier this year, we had sister Clare to spend some weeks with us ; more recently we have been three again when Sister Pauline had a month with us. During that time, Mother Elizabeth made her quarterly visit, so we were four, which is much more family-like. Sister Lynda Mary and I do appreciate the presence of others during the times of offices and quiet prayer and we were also able to use the opportunity for some thoughtful and rich discussions—but that is not to say that Lynda and I don't discuss, or think, or pray when we are two !

Actually, we have been more steadily in residence since we last wrote, and there have been, besides the usual visits and invitations, one or two of special interest. There is a growing indication that our requests to speak outside are developing more along the lines of a sequence of talks, which is encouraging, and this is more stimulating and challenging in terms of preparation. There are still the one-off talks which give us much pleasure and usually include a sing too !



We are looking forward to inviting the Tertiaries for their area meeting and we value two invitations to participate in activities in the cathedral—the final thanksgiving service for the Bishop Selwyn centenary and—for Lynda—an all night session for young people called 'Dragonfly'.

*From Plaistow, Brother Edward writes :*

Since the last issue of *THE FRANCISCAN*, Brother Nicholas has had a very serious operation on his heart and after spending some time in an intensive care unit is now convalescing, and doing very well indeed. We are rather in the wars at the moment, as Kathleen Makepeace, known and loved by many visitors to the House, suffered a stroke in her flat which has paralysed the whole of her right side. She is very bright and witty about it all, but will remain in hospital for the time being. And then poor Aidan, who was admitted to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London for a general check-up suddenly had a bout of cerebral malaria. It was a Godsend that he was there when it happened as it is unlikely to have been diagnosed anywhere else in England, and he has come through it very well. It does mean, however, that he will now have to remain in the U.K. until the end of September, before returning to Tanzania.

The ordination of Simon to the priesthood in Chelmsford Cathedral was a cause for rejoicing, followed by his 'first mass' in S. Philip's Church. Simon has been helping in the local parish of the Ascension, Victoria Dock, where our tertiary Deaconess Paula Gregory is in charge of the parish. In the autumn, though, he goes up to Trinity College, Oxford to do research in theology and philosophy.

Another event at the House has been a large gathering of tertiaries from all over London for a eucharist and garden party. This is becoming an annual event and is an opportunity for tertiaries to meet who seldom see each other. In the afternoon, Patrick Sookhdeo spoke of his work and vision, which made a very deep impression on us all—Patrick is the founder of 'In Contact', which seeks to build bridges of understanding with immigrant groups, especially with Asians in the area.

*From Harbledown, Brother Giles writes :*

Harbledown summers are always hectic. Some of us have engagements which take us away for several weeks at a time ; numerous visitors want to come and stay ; and so the remaining brothers end up with plenty to do. This summer we thought we were going to get it all well organised. Our programme was carefully considered and arranged so that there would always be sufficient brothers around. We looked forward to the arrival of Brother Stanley, having had a necessary operation, only to discover that he was to come earlier than expected without the operation. We were very glad to welcome him in May, but sad to see him go off in June for the op. and to know that all our careful plans were upset. However we know we will survive and that the Northern Camp and the Pilgrimage in Belgium will not suffer from absences ! Andrew Philip continues to help with the former and Giles will be on the latter. He then goes on to Sweden to visit members of the Third Order. Stanley will have returned by the time this is printed and our autumn programme will be underway. Meanwhile the Lambeth Conference will have taken place and we will have helped with it in various ways. Terry Cyprian is to assist in the Press Office for the duration of the conference. We were able

during the summer to extend a welcome to visitors from South Africa, Australia, the U.S.A., Trinidad and Belgium, apart from people from these isles.

In the longer term our activities develop as time goes on. The work of mission continues with visits by brothers from this friary to Hadleigh, New Cross, Cokethorpe School, Pennthorpe School and Cottingham. And we look forward to a series of quiet days and visits from parishes and schools in this part of England. Already our diary for next year is getting uncomfortably crowded. Alongside this development we strengthen our ties with the city and cathedral of Canterbury by our involvement in their life and work. Notable among this is Andrew Philip's continuing youth work, which now includes being leader of the Phab Club, a youth club where physically handicapped and able-bodied youngsters can meet and mix together. Adrian spends one day a week at the cathedral and is available to visitors and others who wish to speak to him. As the cathedral has thousands of visitors a day he has little spare time. Another connection with the cathedral is the work Terry Cyprian does as Public Relations Officer. He liaises with the press, radio, and television and encourages them to report the many creative events that happen in and around the cathedral.

Meanwhile at the friary we appreciate the kindness of our neighbours and friends, the visits of those who 'drop in', the wayfarers who occasionally come, the ladies who do our mending. The garden grows well and is both more beautiful and more productive than ever. One distinguished visitor always thinks this place and its surroundings have a 'touch of Tuscany'. The one missing ingredient so far this summer has been the sun.

*From West London, Brother Thaddaeus writes :*

On 4 July we moved from 60 Ashmore : within a week the council had corrugated the doors and windows leaving the house looking much as it had before our arrival four and a half years ago ; the work of renovation is expected to start in September ! To avoid unnecessary expense and difficulty in the re-direction of mail please address post to : MARANATHA, then recipients name, 105 SALTRAM CRESCENT, LONDON W.9.

Maranatha will be somewhat different to 60 Ashmore : for one thing it is a larger property. The ground floor is used by the tenants association of the housing association to whom the house belongs, a residents' association and it is hoped an adult literacy course and others will make use of the space. One room will be occupied by Paddington Christian Council's community worker.

On the first floor is the chapel, community room, guest room, and kitchen, providing the main living space. Within the chapel the familiar four fold office will be the basic, supplemented by daily prayer of varied nature and midweek celebration of the eucharist.

The house will be the regular West London meeting place of U.S.P.G. initiated 'Christians Aware', prayer groups and other gatherings to give an opportunity for Christians involved in diverse spheres to meet one another. This, it is hoped, will grow naturally from members of the house in their commitments, contacts, and places of work.

Maranatha, 'Come O Lord' is our cry ; in our prayer, in community, in work, in gatherings, and in hospitality we pray that our lives, locality and world may change : that though fumbling and searching, Christ's will may be made known, that God's reign of peace and justice may come.

### *News from Llandudno*

After the best part of two years at S. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Brother Nathanael was ordained to the Diaconate on 24 June in Bangor Cathedral by the Archbishop of Wales. It was a splendid service, and the presence of about ten of the Brethren in the presence of a large congregation, made it a significant Franciscan occasion. Nathanael is serving his title curacy at Caernarvon, where he will have ample scope for pastoral work, and experience in town and some neighbouring villages. He will hear plenty of Welsh spoken and will have plenty of opportunity to use it. Incidentally the Ordination Service was very evenly shared between Welsh and English.

This year's Rally was held on 6 May at Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno, through the kindness of the Rector, Chancellor Elwyn Roberts. There was an excellent attendance, and the talks in the afternoon by the Brethren ranged over the life of the Society generally, to the life of ministry of the House locally, as well as Novice Training, and the work of the University Chaplaincy at Bangor. It was a great pleasure to have the Archbishop and the Dean of Bangor present.

Recently a student friend who is doing research, and who stayed with us a few years ago, made us a gift of a Humber Sceptre, which was most generous of him. Unfortunately, however, it is turning out to be a 'chronic Petroholic' and very expensive to run, and will have to be exchanged for a more economical vehicle.

Sister Gabriel and Sister Jannafer share regularly in local prayer groups, one of which is ecumenical. Sister Gabriel is also often asked to visit the sick and is of immense help to them spiritually. Recently she was invited to Penrhos College Junior School, Colwyn Bay to conduct their Sunday morning service. Sister Jannafer talked to the Mothers' Union at the Marble Church at their June meeting and has been invited to another parish in the same group. Brother Raphael shared, almost at a moment's notice, in the Mission at Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne recently, with Brother Rufus and others. Brother Silyn was on the Welsh B.B.C. one morning answering some queries about the House, its ministry, and the relevance of the Franciscan life to the wider community. Earlier this year he gave talks on 'counselling' to clergy both of S. Asaph and Bangor dioceses. Brother Vincent has been involved in ecumenical circles in the area in recent months, and he attends the regular meetings of 'The North Wales Magic Circle' at Rhyl. Sister Gwenfryd was asked to attend the 'Partners in Mission consultation' in S. Michael's College, Llandaff.

The Tertiary gatherings held every two months or so in the area are steadily growing, and the interest fellowship-wise, as well as in shared prayer and study, is very much in evidence. Latterly, special attention has been given to the subjects of Healing and Intercession in relation to the work of Healing, and the books of Father MacNutt O.P., have been particularly helpful. 'Franciscan Spirituality' was the subject of the last meeting on 11 July.



The parish of Denbigh, where we led Bible study groups in Lent, has made frequent use of the House this year—with the study group coming for a quiet day and the Youth Club's visit in May. Earlier, a group of Confirmands also came on an evening visit.

There has been quite a flow of visitors to the House in the last month or two—some to stay a week or more, and others just for a few hours. It was particularly gratifying to have Canon Saunders Davies and Cynthia to lunch a week or so ago, prior to their departure from Bangor to Swansea. They have been generous with their friendship, and most helpful to our life and work ever since we came to North Wales and will be greatly missed. John Ankers has also been a frequent visitor this year from his work centre at Rhos-on-Sea; he goes to Hilfield this August to test his vocation.

The garden work is well forward this year, thanks to the help and indefatigable labours of John and Daniel, two of our regular wayfarers. Some of the produce has found its way to the table already. One morning last week, Sister Jannafer quickly spotted through the Chapel window, some hardened trespassers—half a dozen sheep. When chased, it was significant how quickly they found exits other than the gateway!

*From Dar es Salaam, Brother Hugh writes :*

Saba saba—the seventh day of the seventh month—is a national holiday in Tanzania. Originally a political anniversary it is now celebrated annually as Peasants' Day. So yesterday the main road nearest to our friary was thronged with all manner of brightly dressed folk trudging along in the sand beside the tarmac on their way to the International Trade Fair put on for the occasion near Dar es Salaam.

It has been a time for celebrating at the friary recently too. Brother Ninian has completed his four month Swahili language course near Lake Victoria and has returned to us *via* the thirty-six hour train journey of some nine hundred miles. His cheerful, friendly presence is already much appreciated in the friary and the musical world of Dar es Salaam is beginning to offer him interesting opportunities of work. He has been asked to conduct the Music Society Choir and also to teach at the Music Conservatoire of Tanzania.

Brother Tshiamala is to be heartily congratulated on passing the driving test on the Land Rover—the first African brother to do so.

Last but not least—the clothing occurred just before the last FRANCISCAN came out—we welcome a new novice, formerly John Yuda, now Brother Yuda. He is happily and industriously fitting into the life of the friary.

We are looking forward to the visit of Brother Geoffrey and to the Life Profession of Brothers Petro, Wulfram and Amos. This will be another 'first'—the first Life Professions of Tanzanian Brothers.

Brother Hugh having arrived here for three months in March is now staying to complete a longer tour. He is due to go to Language school in September.

Amidst our activity we trust that the real centre of our lives is in the worship of God particularly in our beautiful chapel. It is there that each day begins for us in the cool morning with the light of another African day filtering through the windows.

And there too each day ends with Compline said against the background of the animal and bird sounds of the African night. As we do not forget you, please do not forget us.

*Brother John Charles writes :—*

**PACIFIC PROVINCE** In my last contribution to the Chronicle there was an error—Brother Francis Joses is still with us at Alangaula.

As a result of the meeting in June of the Provincial Chapter of the First Order a number of changes have been made in the life and structure of the Province. Firstly, as to the Brothers.

Brother Gerard is to go to New Guinea and Brother Francis Damian to return to Brookfield area in 1979. Brother Randolph is to return to Papua New Guinea in 1979. Brother Geoffrey Leonard is to be a novice tutor at Alangaula. Brother Brian is to be chaplain to the Clares at Stroud from January, 1979, and is to be set free to explore his vocation to a life of prayer. Brother Iltyd has been granted exclaustation. Brother Leslie is to help the Sisters at Stroud in the building of their new convent.

Secondly, the Chapter decided to accept the invitation of the Bishop of Newcastle to open a new house in his diocese. This is an exciting and challenging venture. We hope to be located in an area of deprivation, economic and spiritual, and to be a 'presence' in its midst without attachment, in the beginning, to a particular work. We will be looking for a rented house and for part time jobs to support ourselves. We are asking the diocese for no fixed budgetary support, although we hope to receive the generous help of church people. At the moment we have no house, no income and no jobs. Please pray for us as we explore all these needs. We begin with a beautiful chalice and paten, the gift of Archbishop Moline, and the promise of Brother Bruce Paul's stored kitchen utensils. Brother John Charles is to be guardian, and Chapter seconded Brothers Peter, Leo Anthony and Masseo to make up the team. We hope to be settled in early in January, 1979.

Thirdly, the Chapter agreed to an experimental sub-division of the province for three years, with John Charles having the oversight of Australia and New Zealand and Philip that of Papua New Guinea and The Solomon Islands.

Fourthly, Brother Bruce Paul was elected to profession in simple Vows.

*Brother Reginald writes from New Zealand :*

While the ministry in the parish and the local community continues at Glen Innes, we believe that if the Society is to grow in New Zealand, we need a base where we can concentrate primarily on the religious life, independently of any work commitment such as looking after a parish.

So we are looking towards the establishment of a friary in which regular prayer can be seen to be the centre of our life, where our family can offer some facilities to visitors—especially those who want to make private retreats—and from which the brothers can undertake outside ministries which they are invited or equipped to do. We should like to be able to grow a certain amount of food, because the witness of a simple life-style is important. Such a friary should provide a suitable training house for novices.

Ideally we would not see this friary as an alternative to a house, like Glen Innes, in a residential area. Both kinds of house together would be a balanced expression of the Franciscan life. But the next step seems clear. Pray that we may be shown when and where !

**Alangaula, Solomon Islands**

After working on the repairs and alterations of the Chapel for six months, during which time the repairs turned out to be major rebuilding, S. Barnabas' Chapel at Alangaula was ready for rededication in May.

The rebuilding work had been undertaken by Alick Anisi a friend of the Community with the help of the Brothers and a couple of young men, Rudguard and Charles. In the latter stages of the work the Brothers had given up much of their free time. The bamboo ceiling had been pulled out, and a new lower ceiling put in. Beams and walls had been replaced and rebuilt, the Lady Chapel pulled down, and a new Lady Chapel built by building a wall of decorated bricks across the old Communion step. A Chapel which had been the place of worship for a School of two hundred and fifty was now a suitable place of worship for our family at Alangaula.

The day of rededication started with a couple of disappointments ; the archbishop had found at the last moment that he could not come, but the rain did. A week of constant downpour which couldn't last, did, and the rain poured down. Therefore the congregation at the Sung Eucharist was only two hundred or so. The Minister General was the celebrant and preacher, and we were very happy to have Brother Philip our Deputy Minister also with us. All of the Brothers from Honiara had come over for our Retreat and Custody Meeting, the m.v. *Ebb Tide* had arrived the evening before bringing some of the Sisters of the Church and other friends for the celebrations. During the Sung Eucharist all of the Brothers gathered around the altar while the Minister General said a prayer of rededication, during which we rededicated the chapel, our lives and community to God and his service.

Three choirs had come from Ugi, one of which was the winner of the Solomon Islands Choir Competition ; they sang the various parts of the Service, which was all very moving and beautiful.

The rain stopped for the Feast and dancing which was held midday ; the village people had caught ten pigs on Bio Island, these with the cow and another pig, much



fish kumera and pudding, had been cooked by the Brothers, village people and Pawa School. As usual the feast, spread on the ground, was an occasion of much fun, singing and speeches, all having enough to eat, although in honesty those who were to leave in the *Ebb Tide* later in the day ate sparingly (they had had a very rough trip to Ugi). The Brothers and Pawa School then did some custom dancing for the visitors, and when I say the Brothers all took part, enthusiasm and joy was the mark of the dancing of Brian and Daniel, rather than accuracy.

After an early Evensong, *Ebb Tide* left for Honiara, and the Island people and remaining Brothers finished with a film show put on by the kindness of the adult education service.

### The Brisbane Custody

Waterloo Station best describes Brookfield at times, or at least it seems that way. Certainly there is a great deal of comings and goings. Brothers going off to take missions in various directions in places as far from Brookfield as Moscow is from London; Brother Alan Barnabas away on Third Order chaplains' business or doing a month's tour flying all over the outback of Queensland giving support and pastoral care to the bush brothers scattered over many thousands of miles of the sparsely populated countryside.

There is a brother going off each month to supply the chaplaincy to the Clares in Stroud, N.S.W.; retreats to be led; Brother Wayne off to the prison to interview a prospective resident; the quiet work with people both here and outside the friary; the regular round of novice lectures; the pottery and the vegetable garden, as well as the odd jobs we do outside to bring in money for our support. All this and more is part of our week. Even in this 'fluid' situation it all holds together and people continue to grow, primarily because of two things: our commitment to our chapel life, and our commitment to our brotherhood life, backed up by a strong core group of professed who are prepared to accept the responsibility that goes with shared decision making.

To top the year off we had both the First Order Brothers Chapter, followed a week later by the Provincial Chapter, at Brookfield. It was 'beaut' to have the overseas brothers at our place. We are twelve thousand miles away from the nearest S.S.F. brothers' province, and 'down under'; the isolation is real. We gained much through this contact, friendships were built, ideas and opinions understood. A lot of work, but there were the fun things as well.

We wanted to give our visiting brothers a taste of Aussie wildlife. So off to the Koala Sanctuary we go. Snakes, koalas and kangaroos were there to delight the tourist (and the odd Aussie brother, who believe it or not had never seen a kangaroo before). Most had their photo taken cuddling the koala, but none were willing to have a ten feet python snake draped around their necks for a photo which is guaranteed to give any mother a stroke!

Picture this: One very tall brother in a grey mac, and another brother not so tall find themselves in the Koala house surrounded by herds of pre-school children. Suddenly one little girl stares up at the tall brother and says, 'Hey mister, are you an elephant'. Embarrassed and confused, he is struck dumb. Not so the other brother, who as quick as a flash said to the child, 'Never mind that, kid, just hand over the peanuts!'

Brookfield is only half the story. Our other house in Brisbane, Morris House, completes the custody. Brookfield has its after-care work with men who have been in mental hospital, prison or who are on probation existing side by side with the various other aspects of life and work. Morris House was set up and flourishes as a hostel. At the moment five of our lads are at High School and Leo Anthony, the Brother in charge has to front up to the school on parent day. Can you imagine being father to five sixteen-year-olds—he copes ably supported by Peter and Bruce Paul. There are five other older lads who make up the family. All the lads are there because of their need for a supportive caring home because of their past experience of a deprived or damaging background.

It is an exciting time for us in this custody because in January next year we will make our third foundation in Australia, the first in eight years. There is the sadness that we will lose some of our best brothers from this custody but we see that another house is essential in Australia if we are to explore other aspects of our Franciscan life other than those now lived in the Brisbane custody. We have waited a long time, pray for us.

*And Brother Moses adds :*

The 'Coffee run' is an ecumenical organisation consisting of clergy and lay people who supply coffee, sandwiches and fruit each morning to the men and women who are in great need in and around the city streets of Brisbane. These people come from all walks of life : interstate travellers, the unemployed, young and old, migrant, aborigines, derelicts and alcoholics. For some, the morning coffee and 'hand out' is the main meal of the day. There are seven points in the city where these people wait for the food and approximately two hundred and fifty people are served this way. Several brothers share in the ministry, which starts at 4.30 a.m. each day.

Since last writing for THE FRANCISCAN AMERICAN PROVINCE several changes have taken place in the American Province. Our Chapter was held in April and at that time Brother Philip Leonard was elected Guardian of Little Portion Friary. Brother Robert Hugh was re-elected as Guardian of San Damiano Friary in San Francisco. Brother Mark Charles and Brother Desmond were elected as Guardians of Bishop's Ranch and S. Anthony's Friary respectively.

On 14 May, Brother Matthew David made his first profession in our Society. The Eucharist was held in the Christian Worship Center at S. Andrew's Episcopal Church. Despite the heavy rain a goodly number made it to the service. Brother Luke was the preacher on the occasion. Father Lemuel Winterbottom, rector of S. John's Church was the celebrant and was assisted by Brother Joel and Father Burtner Ulrich. A cold buffet supper followed the profession.

On 1 July, two of our brothers will be taking up new positions. Brother Chad will be attached to the Yonkers house and Brother John Jonah will be at Bishop's Ranch ; he arrives just in time for the full summer program.

The Provincial and Brothers Robert Hugh and Philip Leonard attended the First Order Brothers' Chapter at the Brookfield Friary where from all accounts not only was the Chapter worthwhile but they also were royally entertained. Highlight was a visit to Lone Pine Reserve where Luke and Philip Leonard were photographed with koala, after Luke declined the offer to have a python draped around his neck !

On 15 August, four young men will be clothed at Little Portion ; please keep David James, Martin Clement, John Evangelist, Aaron in your prayers.

The Franciscan Festival at Little Portion was down in numbers this year ; due to the dark overcast day only a hundred plus ventured out. However those who came had a good day. Father Ralph Pittman provided the entertainment in the afternoon.

The Bishop's Ranch family will again host the annual fourth of July picnic for friends in California.

Trinity Sunday saw the clothing of Brother Charles at S. Anthony's Friary. On 6 May a farewell party was held for Brother Dominic ; he has now returned to the States and will be attached to the Yonkers house.

#### **The Community of S. Francis, San Francisco**

*Sister Cecilia writes :*

The summer brought several people to stay in our guest apartment and we would warmly invite any readers coming to San Francisco, to avail themselves of our facility. This is a beautiful city to visit !

Sister Jean has withdrawn from the Meals-on-Wheels program and spent a busy five weeks at S. Dorothy's, one of our diocesan camp centers. Sister Catherine Joy returned to Compton Durville after her six months' visit and we welcome Sister Hilary from England. Sister Alison spent a short time with us on her way back to England from Australia. Sister Lucia has withdrawn from the Community.

Loving greetings from us all to our friends throughout the world ; we are grateful for your prayers and assure you of ours.



## The Church and the Handicapped Person

**W**HEN a group of handicapped people enter a Church, for a visit, or because they live near that particular church, what must one do? What do the handicapped really want?

They do not want to be a 'Group of people set aside'. They do not want to be considered something 'different', more or less, they do not want a special charity organisation to see to their needs, in a way they do need such, but not so special that it cuts them off from able-bodied people. In fact, many of these Charity organisations build up a barrier between the disabled person and the able-bodied person, very much like the colour-bar. Many do good, but many are in danger of building up such a barrier.

When disabled people come to Church, they want to be greeted like everyone else, they want to take part in the activities in the Church, help in anything they can, mix with the congregation as much as they can. Congregations should be encouraged to invite them home, and the disabled person invite people to his if possible. In this way, the barrier will be broken, and the disabled person, as you get to know him, will become a person, you will forget his handicap, and find that in himself, especially if he is a Christian, he will have a lot to give.

The Church, above all, should not be able to see the handicapped side of a person at all, it should see the soul. The soul is more important, and is the same in disabled and able-bodied people alike.

The disabled person, especially the intelligent ones who will not lie low, are a nuisance, are a burden, who will get frustrated if they are not allowed to live their lives just like everyone else, as much as they can to their abilities, or if they are not allowed to be themselves. Yes, they may be a burden, but at least they are alive, at least they have a brain to give something if allowed to do so.

TYPED BY TOES.

### CORRECTION

The name of the writer of the article 'Sounds in Silence', in our last number (on Handicaps), should be STEWART CHESSUN.

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## *Christmas Presents*

Have you ever thought of giving a subscription to THE FRANCISCAN as a Christmas present?

## The Search for God — and the Christian's Response



A GOOD many years ago, while attending a conference of philosophers I became involved in a long argument about the existence of God. The man with whom I was arguing was a close friend and a convinced atheist. As so often happens with such arguments, it went on until well after midnight and it became clear that we must either stop or be prepared to carry on indefinitely. As we relaxed into more general topics of conversation, I made what I thought to be a purely casual, throwaway remark to the effect that since my friend seemed so convinced that talk about God was an interesting pastime, but little else, and since he certainly thought that philosophy had far more important questions to deal with, it did seem that his obsession with the subject bespoke an uncertainty about his own position, and that perhaps indicated some desire to be a believer. This remark started another long conversation but my friend with great honesty said that he would in fact, very much like to believe in God, but that because he was convinced of the non-existence of such a being, he clearly could not call himself a believer.

What my friend was, I believe saying, was that for various logical reasons he found arguments for the existence of God, such as those put forward by S. Thomas Aquinas in the Five Ways, unsatisfactory. On the other hand, the kind of God, S. Thomas seemed to be talking about, and the kind of approach he was taking seemed to my friend far more reasonable than some modern attempts. For example a statement such as—‘Belief in God is the trust, the well nigh incredible trust, that to give ourselves to the uttermost in love is not to be confounded but to be “accepted”, that love is the ground of our being, to which ultimately we “come home”’ (J. A. T. Robinson, ‘Honest to God’, S.C.M. Press, 1963, p. 49)—seemed to him both comparatively meaningless in itself, and quite out of keeping with Christianity. Indeed he would say that the writer must clearly be a non-believer.

I have reported this discussion because it raises a number of questions which bear upon the theme of seeking a faith, and as these questions are uncovered they may help to shed some light on the way in which the Church might respond to an individual embarked on the search.

*The person, the culture, the desire for God.*

The first thing about the situation in which the discussion took place is that it was a dialogue between two people with very similar backgrounds, and very similar interests. In both cases the death of a father had been experienced at about the time of early adolescence. In my friend's case his father had, shortly before his death become a non-believer, and at the same time my friend had rejected Christianity, though his mother, who had always been a dominant figure in the family, and deeply committed to the Church, continued to practise her Christian faith. In my own case my father was a priest and after his death my mother had far more doubts about her religion I believe than I ever realised at the time. Such facts may or may not be significant. My friend and I were both philosophy students—he with a scientific background, I with an arts training. We shared similar political attitudes, a similar ethical stance, similar aesthetic values. We knew the arguments for and against belief in God, we both knew that the problem of evil has not ever been satisfactorily answered, yet one of us claimed to be a believer, the other a non-believer, and though the intellectual arguments were and are very important they are not a sufficient, or I suspect even a necessary cause for belief in God ; they do not do justice to that complex of factors which make a person claim to be a believer, or a non-believer.

Secondly the whole question about the nature of belief arises. If one asks 'What or who supplies belief systems?', the answer most frequently given is that they are supplied and generated by the culture. Belief in fact, once thought of as being a natural fact of creation and probably instilled by divine action, shows a remarkable diversity of origins and correlations with social and cultural processes. When one considers the wide variety of beliefs and practices which could be covered by normal uses of the word 'religion' one is hard pressed to find anything in common between them. Definitions of belief are liable to change over time and in different cultures. Bacon's phrase that there is a superstition in avoiding superstition focuses the difficulty ; it takes a kind of faith to be an unbeliever. Belief and unbelief interact and the tension is located in each individual, each Church, each culture. Recently on television there has been an example of two men, both ordained Anglican priests, both philosophers, whose beliefs about what the phrase 'the divinity of Christ' means are quite different. It becomes clear that to compare a group of believers with a group of



unbelievers, when we know that within each group individuals are tormented by questions of belief and unbelief, is a shabby exercise. So too, for my friend to refer to Bishop Robinson as an unbeliever and S. Thomas as a believer, is quite simply a futile game. We simply cannot indulge in this game of calling unbelievers any who do not share our particular posture, for many unchurched persons just do claim to believe in central Christian tenets, and many church people do in fact deny those very same tenets.

Another consideration which arises out of my friend's remarks centres on the statement that he would *like* to believe in God. I suspect that a great many Christians, particularly those who see it as part of their Divinely given work to help others to belief, subscribe to the opinion that if any person sufficiently wants to believe, then he will do so. After all, God would hardly be showing love and compassion if he failed to make the fact of his existence clear to such a person. But if God did reveal himself unambiguously to everyone who really wanted to believe, surely God would no longer be God—the object of faith, and would instead be a certainty, and proofs of his being would be open to some kind of empirical testing. However one might still want to make the kind of assertion that anyone who sufficiently wanted to believe could do so, not by expecting God to provide the certainty but simply by saying that if one really wants to believe, then one will. For example it might suit me to believe that the politician for whom I am voting is honest, so I do believe that. However that line cannot work either, for the non-believer is not simply trying to believe a certain quality which God might have, *e.g.* honesty, love, etc. My friend for example clearly thought that if God existed he would be more like the God of whom S. Thomas wrote than the one of whom John Robinson wrote, but it was whether in fact there was a God to have any qualities at all that he found himself denying. At all events if it were true that simply wanting to believe was all that was needful for belief to follow then belief need not refer to anything that had objective existence. The only thing that follows from this view is, as Freud said in 'Civilization and its Discontents' that such is the power of the promises of religion, that it will continue to appeal to many people.

*Seeing and partly seeing.*

The other question raised by my friend's wanting to believe is as to whether he is thereby put into the position of a seeker. He could

certainly in some sense be described as a seeker after truth, but was he seeking Truth—that is God, and is he the very sort of person that this paper is concerned with? I believe that the answer here must be in the affirmative, but that seekers vary in how far they have got in their search, and in what direction they will look for an answer. Generally people will look in the kind of direction that they would like the answer to be. My friend for example later took up Zen. Others might search in Evangelistic Missions. A year ago the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union organised a mission to the University and John Stott was the missionary. I heard of a number of people who ‘became Christians’, *i.e.* accepted the presentation of Christianity that was offered in that mission. Certainly I conducted no real research into the question but from talking to one or two of these converts it was clear that they had not been dragged screaming to the mission—they were well on in their emotional and intellectual search. Not all of them expected to be convinced and were surprised that they were now happily calling themselves Christians. ‘Once I was blind, but now I see’, was their feeling, though a truer description of their new state could be found in the words of Bill Kerr, a lecturer in Education in the University of Birmingham—‘once I was blind, now I am partially sighted’. Others who attended meetings for curiosity value, non-believers, and believers of a different kind, were moved in different ways. It seems that there is a point at which a person is ready for religion, though how one defines that point is not at all clear. Three further examples will illustrate the difficulty. Not long after taking up my present post I was visited by an undergraduate desirous of joining my confirmation class. She had never been a believer, there was no evidence of any religious practice in her family. She had quite simply during the vacation been confronted with a moral problem and had turned to God. By the time she visited me she clearly thought of herself as a Christian and now she wanted to find out what Christians believed. She had, and has little in common with the Christianity that some of her friends espoused but she never doubted the reality of her right to use the same title for herself.

Another student wrote me a note on the first day of the academic year. She was desperately unhappy and lonely. When I visited her she was slightly more composed and she asked about joining Christian instruction classes. A month later she was coping admirably in the college environment and as time went on it became clearer that the

crisis had passed. In a moment of need she had wondered whether religion might provide a stable point, but she was not ready for it.

A third student joined a study group to find out more about this strange phenomenon called Christianity. In his home background there had been a certain amount of overt rejection of it, and being a good student he was unwilling to believe claims that he could not test. He was puzzled on coming to the university to find that a great many of his friends, and his girlfriend in particular were very active Christians. Why should this be so? He is a warm, sensitive, affectionate and gentle person with a keen brain. The classes I suspect enlarged his degree of tolerance for Christianity and for Christians. In some sense he saw . . . but yet did not believe.

### *Ready for religion.*

These three people, like the converts at the mission provide a degree of evidence that there is a point in the lives of some people when, because of an immense multiplicity of factors, only one or two of which may be apparent at the time, they are ready for religion. When that happens the kind of religion they adopt will itself be influenced by a countless number of factors, internal and external to themselves. There will be group pressures, intellectual pressures, and underlying all psychological pressures. It has often been said that religion is caught not taught, and though such a view slides too easily over the intellectual area of religious claims to objective truth, nevertheless there is that in the experience of conversion which might well be described thus. For religion does develop in a social matrix, as does illness, and one is likely to catch it if and only if one is so orientated at that particular time—this I have described as readiness for religion.

In the later editions of 'The Idea of the Holy', Rudolph Otto assumed a kind of disposition for numinous experience with the implication that the strength of such a disposition will vary from person to person. Religious heroes such as Moses, Mohammed, S. Augustine, S. Francis and Luther have a genius for experiencing the holy, others have only a weak awareness of it, and as with all talents, one thing which is necessary to bring the talent to fruition is a stimulating environment. Nature and nurture cannot be separated, and the numen itself is active in eliciting man's experience of the holy—i.e. there is that in objective reality which corresponds to the subjective experience.



Paul Pruyser (in 'Between Belief and Unbelief', Sheldon Press, 1974) follows the writings of Winnicott and concludes that reality is not simply split between an inner and an outer aspect, but permits an intermediate sphere in which there are varying degrees of practice. Other writers in a similar way build on theories of child development as the clue to religious sensibility. Among them John Hick (in for instance 'Christianity at the Centre' and 'Faith and Knowledge') sees the parent-child experience as all important in forming attitudes both to authorities and to God.

## II

*We now turn to the question 'in the light of all this, how can we help each other to enter into relationship with God?'.*

I believe that there is no one answer to this, nor one series of answers, but that the above serves to provide guidelines.

Writing in Theology (January, 1965) Ninian Smart wrote—'There are two things which hold an intellectual from Christianity—moral disapproval of Christian prescriptions—and difficulties about belief in God'. Smart's answer on the second of these was the necessity of reconstructing the concept of a transcendent (and immanent) being, for 'unless transcendence is taken seriously, there can be no truth claim in Christianity'. Examination of Winnicott's work with Pruyser's interpretation of it will emphasize the importance of this, as will the opening dialogue between my friend and me in which what was demanded was not a watering down of theology into immanentist terms exclusively but a rigorous coming to terms with the intellectual problems posed by believing in the transcendent God. In this area then the Church is at risk if she too much conforms herself to the patterns of the world, and changes God talk into man talk in order to make belief easier.

Again we have noted that a too glib definition of what constitutes belief and unbelief, sealing the two into watertight compartments, and standing exclusively on the side of a narrowly defined orthodoxy is simply to court the severest of rejection. People must be permitted to be themselves in their relationship with God. How often has one viewed a human relationship and wondered how on earth it could work and yet grudgingly had to admit that the parties concerned are obviously fulfilled to the maximum of their potential in it? If, as I have suggested it takes a kind of faith to be an unbeliever then it is the nature of that

faith that the Church will try to explicate—the depth of character for which that faith is evidence. To attempt to foist a set of beliefs on to a person who has good reasons for taking a quite different stance is in the end to be so preoccupied with an idea as to forget that the word had to become flesh in order to communicate. It is not grand thoughts that populate the heavens ! There is a kind of subtle dishonesty in a religious conviction held so firmly that it will not listen to the expressed faith of another.

If the Church is to exercise her ministry to the seeker effectively, she will have to come to terms with the fact that there is a point when a seeker may be ready for religion, but we cannot give religion to another—we may be present as facilitators, but the focus of the action is always between God and the individual. Indeed to try to contrive situations in which a person might catch religion is to fall into the danger of prejudging our own belief systems as superior. What is important is that Christians are seen to live out the practices that seem to follow from their beliefs—that they do manifest the fruits of the spirit. Patience, gentleness, kindness, long suffering—are not generally characteristics of a person who knows he is right and that everybody who doesn't agree is mistaken. Before the Christian's belief system can become acceptable and accepted, it must be respectable and respected. But having said that, it remains true that the way to religious belief will be different for each individual.

Models of child development suggest ways in which individuals come to perceive the transcendent—and suggest an analogy for the way in which Christians come to live out their belief systems in terms of behaviour. Church practice can learn much from this in the way local congregations see their responsibility for their membership. Baptism, the central rite of membership of the Church, provides an ideal opportunity for instruction to parents and sponsors about the life model which will help the child in his relationships with authorities and with God. If parents and godparents provide an example of loving, caring interest in the child's development—if they are seen as honest people who exhibit in their own lives an interest in others, and a genuine concern for others, if in short there is a real depth of spirituality, then it is more likely than not, that the child will develop a positive view of, and relationship to, the authority which is their motive force. This responsibility clearly is one that can be shared through the whole congregation, though it will be most influential in the closest, most

intimate of relationships. Certainly the parent-godparent relationship to the child in terms of emotional support can be an extension of the giving love of mother, providing too a social context in which the transcendent can be experienced.

To sum up then, I have argued that the dimension of life which is a central element in the religious viewpoint may find expressions other than anything which we would normally call religious. I have suggested that there may occur a time—a point of crisis at which the individual is ready for religion and is maximally responsive to it. The Church in her life must be sensitive to that point and respond in a way that accepts, and yet calls the individual on to an even fuller commitment—and a fuller selfhood. Religious, or even Christian faith will not start in terms of a narrow orthodoxy though it may end there. First there is growing to be done. The Church that trusts that it is God who has met the searcher in his moment of readiness, will be wide enough to let that relationship develop in its own way, in its own time.

D. J. L. RICHARDSON.

## Locating Holiness



IT is no strange thing that man has constantly through history, sought, however fragmentarily, to capture in imagery and symbolism the inmost experiences of his mind. Indeed, in today's western world 'when man has come of age' we are witnessing a gradual awakening, particularly amongst the young, to the Religious Idea. Even though this flowering seems, at first, to bear little resemblance to orthodox religious concepts, there lies nevertheless at root level a common theme, a search, a questioning as to 'Who am I?', 'What am I here for?', 'Is there anything beyond death?'.

Over the last fifty years the western Church has witnessed a steady numerical decline in membership and along with this, society has been changing at a phenomenal rate. People feel that the old established patterns are hollow and meaningless, and yet still feel the need to express their religious instincts; they are attempting to express themselves in new ways, hence the proliferation of new religious sects in



America and in this country. The various opinion polls reveal that a substantial proportion of the population still claim to have some religious belief. All this poses a great problem for the Church which feels confused in this transitional period of time.

I believe that one of the most dangerous things a man can do is to divorce his religion from everything else in life, and yet so often the pressures of modern living seem to force him to do this very thing. Man goes home in order to preserve his sanity. He comes to think in terms of Sacred and Secular—Black and White. His religion becomes privatised while the world goes on ‘out there’. He is unable to relate sense experience to inner experience, thus creating a very real division within himself. This division is a fact for so many people, and the sad thing is that they are nearly always unaware of it. Once a man can recognise this dichotomy, that at first appears to be irreconcilable, then we can say that he is on the way to discovering who he really is. Blake\* has said, ‘If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern’. For Christians the supreme example of wholeness must be that of the mystery of Christ in His Incarnation—He is God and at the same time He is man, no more or less. Of course here we are talking of something that defies words and yet at the same time needs to be expressed, however inadequately. This is why the use of image and symbol is so important for us all; it can be a very powerful conveyor of truth if properly understood.

The Church in western Europe has tended to rationalise its faith in formularies and creeds, and I suppose this has been part of its inheritance on assuming the civil power at the collapse of the Roman Empire. There is indeed a place for rationalism, but sadly and all too often it has stifled the essential other-ness of the Christ-truth. Creeds are wrong if they stop where they are, if they are not built upon; they are the bones that need to be clothed with flesh. The theologian is called to ‘practise the sort of precision which is demanded of poets, struggling to arrange words around an invisibility, in a way which will uphold the central thing strongly and clearly but never confound it by changing its nature into something without mystery’.\*\* The early Fathers clearly saw this in their allegorical interpretation of scripture; using symbol and image so that the spark of interior vision may be kindled.

\* Collected poems of William Blake.

\*\* Angels and Dirt by John Drury, p.97.

Man is by nature a social animal and so it is important for him to relate his religious experiences to other human beings in order that he may let others at least glimpse into the well spring that is beneath even the most impoverished men. Each local community has its own folk-lore often stretching back beyond any written documentation ; so that what a community is today is largely the result of its own collective legend. And here I am not so much talking about concrete events in history but of the thoughts, pictures and symbols that have arisen from them. It has been the conscious, or the unconscious, task of each generation to transmit to their children this legend so that it becomes the cord that links the past with the present, giving to the present a sensibility for interpreting the future. The tragic thing is that as a community grows in size and becomes increasingly mobile, so the sense of its inheritance ceases to be a focal point in the lives of the people. This inheritance—the collective legend—gives to a community its sense of purpose and direction, its belonging each to other. It is a prime task for every man constantly to re-call his community and make it re-face the reality of its own origins.

Occasionally a particular event dominates the local scene so that all other events tend to strengthen or enhance it. Often such a place is called ' Holy '—locus Dei, which means that something has occurred in time but its initiation has been caused from something beyond time, it is an intervention of the Divine. We all know of such places as Walsingham and Glastonbury where there is often a feeling of saturation, a concentration of supernatural energy. Doctor Otto in his book ' The Idea of the Holy ' calls this the ' Numinous '. It must also be recognised that where such places are as it were, impregnated with the Divine essence, they are equally susceptible to demonic forces, the border line between demonic and divine being a very thin one. However, there has been throughout the ages a mysterious attraction for God-seeking people to seek out these places bringing with them the conflicts common to all men but nevertheless asking for renewal and reorientation. Let me try to illustrate the way in which legend can be used as an effective means of awakening a community (or at least the people of God within that community) to a sense of the interaction between that which is commonly called the natural and the supernatural.

The monasteries of the Severn and Avon valleys were undergoing a new lease of life in the eleventh century. There was a general move

toward a more austere life, a return to origins. Among these was Evesham abbey in Worcestershire. Even though the Norman conquest had in many ways been making its presence felt, there was still a very strong Saxon tradition in the Church. Such figures as Wulfstan of Worcester (1008—95) and Aethelwig of Evesham (1010—78) spring to mind. Evesham was a Saxon foundation (c. 700) and the origin of its foundation is portrayed on its thirteenth century conventual seal in a series of pictures. The story is also to be found in its domestic chronicle, the first part being written by Prior Dominic of Evesham between 1104 and 1124. What is so interesting is that here we have at such an early date a very detailed account of an appearance of the Virgin Mary which has about it an air of authenticity. The main points of the story are as follows :

In Saxon times Evesham was a trackless wilderness with only an occasional clearing for a hut. It was probably in one of these simple huts that a herdsman by the name of Eoves lived and it was his job to tend the pigs which belonged to the Bishop of Worcester. It was about the year 700, and while Eoves was tending his pigs as usual he suddenly saw a bright light in the sky. Almost blinded by the light he turned his eyes away ; as he did so he heard what seemed like heavenly music. When he looked up again he saw a beautiful lady attended by two female companions. She carried in one hand a golden Cross and in the other a book studded with gems. She smiled raising the Cross in benediction and in the next instant all had disappeared. Eoves was left dumbfounded. Soon Bishop Egwin of Worcester was told of what had happened and he prepared himself by fasting and prayer to go on pilgrimage to the very spot where Eoves had received the vision. After spending much time in prayer Our Lady appeared to him and said, ' Behold, the place which I have chosen '. These words caused Bishop Egwin to build a monastery there and name the place Eoves-ham (Evesham). Later Egwin resigned his Bishopric and became first abbot of Evesham.

The town of Evesham has its origin in this story and much of its subsequent history belongs to the abbey built on this spot. Centuries later, the climate is vastly different, only a few pay any attention to the first vision and its consequences. Yet something has happened there which the perceptive will know, whether they live there or come as



pilgrims. For the pilgrim seeks out those places where prayer has been made valid.

And so we can see how such a story might set in motion all kinds of deeper meanings for people. Some symbols are very basic and so still have meaning for us, many quite rightly disappear after a time. It is for us today to discover what symbols are meaningful to us and to use them to help us in our search for God. Of course there must be other points of reference, but only if they help us in the here and now to see a reflection of that which is to come.

PAUL LESTER.

## Up the Garden Path



STANDING stones and other prehistoric monuments, earthworks on hilltops, hill figures such as the Cerne giant, ancient trackways—any visitor to the average bookshop in recent years would be aware of a lively interest in such relics of the ancient past. The interest disclosed by books on these subjects is not merely connected with the romance of antiquity. Here is a quest for lost ways of knowledge, for means of recovering access to forces of nature believed to have been apprehended by ancient man but lost by their civilised descendents. When Alfred Watkins, an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist, published *The Old Straight Track* in 1925, his discovery that ancient sites could frequently be aligned across a map led him to suppose that primitive man travelled in straight lines, and that many of his guides and markers could still be seen. But ‘leys’ as Watkins called them are now more frequently thought to be tracks of invisible lines of power. Primitive man’s temples and stone circles are then believed to be means of making the power available for one’s spiritual and physical well-being.

Here is one form of the quest for spiritual meaning in modern times. It is often linked with other mysteries of our time, such as Unidentified Flying Objects (are we being observed by beings from another part of the universe?). The books of Eric von Daniken, seeking to demonstrate that our world was visited in ancient times by beings from elsewhere,

who were the 'gods' of ancient peoples, have aroused much interest. Interesting evidence is cited that greater technological skills were available to many ancient peoples than has usually been thought, though it is of course a considerable imaginative jump to connect this with benevolent travellers through space. In any case, where for instance passages from the bible are cited in evidence, the language of religion is being taken in a literal, matter-of-fact sense rather than as a means of attempting to express the inexpressible experience of the presence of God. Yet there are those for whom a sense of being watched by kindly astronauts from beyond, by whose ancestors aid was given to our own forbears, does excite their religious sensibilities and provide a kind of substitute for faith.

In C. S. Lewis' preface to his book 'Pilgrim's Regress' he examines the many forms in which romantic longing is expressed and finally concludes that it is 'spilled religion'—a longing for God that is not usually recognised as such. It might seem that the current interest in ancient forces of nature, of powers beyond normal cognizance that can be sought for and discerned, is one of the ways in which an unrealised desire for God is expressed.

When the religious quest is recognised as such, there are many claimants to the enquirer's attention. Some of them may appear at the front door. Mormon missionaries are zealous visitors, and much of their message they hold in common with many Protestant persuasions. But it is difficult to read the early history of the movement without suspecting that its founder was either fraudulent or demented. He claimed to have been visited by an angel who led him to discover a book written on gold plates on which the early history of the peoples of the American continent was inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphics. He was also given an instrument like a pair of spectacles which enabled him to read the book. The result was 'The Book of Mormon', declaring that the ancestors of the American Indians were the lost ten tribes of Israel, that the gospel was brought to them by Jesus himself after his resurrection, that the Christian civilisation which ensued was later submerged in darkness and ignorance, and that Mormon himself was the last of their prophets who had written the story on the gold plates which were then buried in a hill till they were ready to be discovered. The Mormons themselves have nevertheless been an industrious people. Their founder was murdered by a mob and their subsequent travels westward, till they founded their own colony at the

Great Salt Lake, Utah, ranks among the stirring epics of the American West. Even out of this strange and uncouth origin has grown a movement zealous and dedicated, though its mythology would be highly comic but for the seriousness with which it is held.

Other visitors to one's front door may be concerned with the second coming of Christ. Some of these are Jehovah's Witnesses, at the death of one of whose founders a daily newspaper reported, 'The man who said, "Millions now living will never die", died yesterday'. It is true that they have their heroes who were persecuted in Nazi Germany. But they have been presenting for years a garbled and bigoted version of the teaching of the bible which has tended to bring religion in general into disrepute in the eyes of many ordinary people. One of their original prophecies was that the Kingdom of God would come in 1914!

Another organisation, known as the Unification Church, was the subject of articles and correspondence in *The Times* late last year. The 'Moon people' as they are sometimes called, are followers of a Korean businessman, Sun Myung Moon. Many of them are recruited in their late teens and early twenties usually having completed at least a sixth-form course, and coming from middle-class backgrounds. One correspondent quoted a report that Mr. Moon had said, 'God is living in me and I am the incarnation of himself. The whole world is in my hand'. 'God is now throwing away Christianity and is establishing a new religion'. 'Master here is greater than Jesus Christ himself'. He is 'Lord of the Second Advent'. Married couples must 'feel stronger towards the Lord (Moon) than between themselves'. The most bitter hostility the movement has aroused has been from parents whose children have been caught up in it and have maintained little or no contact with them ever since. In one case a boy was returned to his parents in a state of total mental collapse. Parents who attack the organisation are called 'Satanic'. On the other hand, some parents who wrote or were interviewed were happy that their children should belong to a group of dedicated young people rather than being caught up in violent activities. No doubt much sincere enthusiasm may be found in the movement's forty centres in Britain, though its teachings, which are not to be bought in any normal bookshop, are reported to reveal a mixture of Taoist philosophy, Christian words and phrases, spiritism, 'Mysticism', numerology and anti-communism, with a leader suffering from a large dose of *folie de grandeur*.



Such 'lunatic fringe' movements are always with us, and danger, apart from individual personal harm to particular adherents, lies in the fact that, having a high quantity of the bogus in their makeup, they obscure the fact that there is a real spiritual quest and a genuine level of spiritual awareness. The impression given is that only cranks take religion seriously. The desire for the quest may find odd and peculiar expression but there is a long succession of witnesses to the genuine discovery of the richness of the life of prayer and service to God in Christ Jesus.

ALBAN S.S.F.

## Seeking and Finding



WHAT do we say to a person who is earnestly seeking God, but says he can't find him? Perhaps we would use something like Augustine's 'He whom we desire to receive, himself causes us to ask; he whom we wish to find causes us to knock . . . And when he is received,

he works to make men desire to receive him more fully by further asking, seeking and knocking', (Sermon XIV on Psalm 119), to reassure him that his desire comes from God's initiative. Often people are encouraged to read the Bible—perhaps Mark's Gospel in a modern translation—and I have met people who claim to have discovered God by this way alone. Or perhaps we should talk about possible blockages in their lives. Soren Kirkegaard says 'It is so hard to believe, because it is so hard to obey'. Is there something you are holding back? A sense of shame, unworthiness, or something we won't give up, can be a real block to finding God. Or we may belong to the sort of Christian group that has a clear three step message for the enquirer; *one*, conviction of sin; *two*, the saving work of Christ; *three*, the act of trust. Or again we might say 'Come to church with me'. I know of people who have found God through the Sung Eucharist at S. Bene't's, Cambridge—they didn't understand it, but knew that some-

thing great was there ; they talked and read and let go until they discovered its secret. Or one might recommend the person to a course of Christian instruction ; a book like Michael Ramsey's ' Christian Belief ', or whichever other book is current or suitable.

Which of these ways we choose will depend on who we are, how we see the other person, and how the situation comes together. The ' Go-Between God ', the Holy Spirit, enables the spark to leap across from one person to another. In the meeting, the exchange, the loving God can make himself known. We share in the travail of begetting someone in the Gospel. There may be long years of prayer by us or by others unknown to us, and then one day it comes together for the other person. Sometimes it is quite dramatic and sudden ; sometimes it is barely perceived. ' I don't know Who—or What—put the question ' says Dag Hammarskjöld, in ' Markings ' (the entry for Whitsun 1961) ' I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember asking. But at some moment I did answer " Yes " to Someone or something, and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that therefore my life in self-surrender had a goal '. Very often another person is involved in it. Sometimes it may be a surprising inflow of joy like C. S. Lewis describes in his book of that title. Or it may be a remarkable perception of beauty in the countryside or in music or painting or by reading about or meeting a person like Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Any or all of these ways, according to the person we are, may be the way we find God. ' The Spirit blows where it listeth '. And why it happens to some and not others remains a mystery to us. If we try to discover a certain psychological type, we are met with a very wide range. If we try to put it on to God, a predestination theory, or a double predestination theory, it doesn't take us much further, except perhaps into a dicey view of God. So perhaps we leave the attempt to discover the ' why ' and try to improve on the ' how '—the ' how ' of praying for people to see, of recognising when they are looking, of suggesting possible steps, of answering possible questions, of having the courage to help others cross the line. To do that we think would be to discharge our responsibility—it's up to the other person what they do.

## II

But all the above tends to heighten the distinction between ' them ', the seekers, and ' us ', the finders. Is it really like that ? Christians

who have it all sewn up, 'God in their pocket', always given rather preferential treatment as the specially chosen ones, come across rather unattractively. One suspects that their Christian certainty is at the cost of denying uncertainties at rather too deep a level. Maybe such denials are necessary to begin with—for instance at adolescent conversion, at a charismatic break-through, or any 'top-to-toe' experience (like falling in love)—but maturity must allow them to come to light and be integrated or converted. Perhaps it is for such reasons that the psalmist's experience may become ours.

'In my prosperity I said "I shall never be moved",  
Your goodness, Lord, has set me on so firm a hill.

Then you hid your face from me  
And I was greatly dismayed'.

The great dismay can follow the great certainty. A low may follow a high : the wilderness testing follow the great certainty as it did after the baptism of Jesus, and S. Luke tells us that the Spirit was in both. 'I'm glad you feel dark and shakey sometimes', says Evelyn Underhill in a letter, 'I do too and I believe it's much safer . . . The alternative is something plump and satisfied'. The great dismay can grow into the great darkness, the great doubt, the great death which, among others, the Zen people recognise as the essential prelude to the great enlightenment. S. John of the Cross knows the dark night which precedes union. There was a deep valley between the Mount of Transfiguration and the resurrection glory : in it was Golgotha.

We may look for natural explanations of the darkness (emotional fluctuations, physical changes or sickness, bereavement, great setback or disappointment) ; we may blame ourselves (and all of us sin) ; or we may blame God ('It's not surprising you have so few friends', says S. Teresa of Avila, 'the way you treat them'). Whatever our explanation or acceptance that we don't know, we have no alternative but to enter the darkness (or recognise we are in it) not knowing the outcome. Trusting that God is in the darkness with us, hidden behind a 'Cloud of Unknowing', that he is in the outcome, that among the good purposes for which he will use the experience is our growth—such trust is both the fruit of the pain and the only thing which keeps us going in it. I believe that there is no other way to Christian maturity. One bit of us may leap forward in faith, but it is a long and painful process for the rest of us to catch up and then leap forward again.



## III

The cost of seeking God in all this, the helplessness, the humiliation, the sheer will-power is that which 'brings us together' into maturity. It is also that which makes us open and available to others. Wounds speak to wounds : pain to pain : doubt to doubt : faith to faith. If we can make this searching part of ourselves available to seekers, if they can sense it exists in us, then they may find us acceptable companions in their search. Who knows, on the way, both of us may find a truer affirmation ?

BERNARD S.S.F.

## Notes on the use of Spiritual Direction



I WANT to consider a few questions concerning the right use of spiritual direction, as one of the many means by which God seeks and finds us.

### I. *What is spiritual direction ?*

Spiritual direction is an enabling ministry. It seeks by dialogue to enable people to respond to the Spirit of God, who is the true director, through whatever they may learn to discern as the movement of the Spirit in their lives at that moment. For example, it seeks to enable people to grow in prayer ; to grow up as human beings ; to walk by faith instead of being driven by fear ; to find freedom in spirit by accepting whatever 'yoke' of discipline fits them ; to live within their limitations ; to rely upon grace instead of 'law' ; and to lose themselves in the service of the Kingdom of God, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. In short, it seeks to help people to see God in their own situations—'enable with perpetual light the dulness of our blinded sight'.

The spiritual director is not necessarily a priest. Laymen (as in the case of Baron von Hügel) and women (such as Evelyn Underhill) have exercised this ministry.

Can direction be given also in a group ? I believe it can, sometimes and for some people. A good, supportive praying group can greatly help people to grow in Christ. It is an intensification on a small scale of what the Christian congregation, as portrayed in the New Testament, is meant to be. Promptings and checkings and insights can come

through belonging to such a group, as they can also come through belonging to a lively, committed congregation—whether the congregation of a parish church, or the congregation in the technical sense of a Religious Order. There is room, then, for different modes of spiritual direction, each with its distinctive strengths, and each with its possible pitfalls.

## II. *What should we expect from spiritual direction ?*

Depending on circumstances and the needs of the moment, we may expect :—

1. Adjustment of our focus in life. Our original vision (of God, of our purpose and call) may fade or become distorted. It is not easy to keep the focus true, especially in the kind of lives most people have to lead in twentieth century western industrial society. So we may expect that in the laying out of our personal life before God, which is the substance of spiritual direction from our side, we shall receive an adjustment of focus, so that the vision is renewed.

2. Disentangling the threads of life. The various strands of personal life may get so tangled that people may be reduced to a helpless mental confusion. Emotional intensity may pull the knots tighter, until people despair of ever getting free. A very important function of spiritual direction is to help to sort out the strands, and to clarify the issues at stake, so that people can see more clearly for themselves what they must do next.

3. Guidance in prayer. The Gospels show Jesus in a relationship of intimacy and openness with God, whom he confidently called 'Abba, Father'. They show the disciples being invited to share this relationship, and the way of praying that goes with it. So it has been ever since : the Spirit of Jesus draws people today into the same relationship of trust and surrender to God, and moves them to pray—to express, intensify and deepen the faith-relationship. As for Jesus, so for the disciples of every age, prayer is an act of will to co-operate with the Father, so that God's plan for the world may be carried out. Here lies the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.

We should look to spiritual direction for help in exploring the implications of this for ourselves, both in seeking the best patterns and methods of prayer to suit our circumstances, and in the overall purpose of gathering up the whole of our life ('recollection') in the loving offering of ourselves to God.

Direction should, if necessary, recall us to the need for constant practice in prayer—‘ the less you pray, the worse it goes ’ was a favourite maxim of Dom John Chapman, alongside his better-known ‘ Pray as you can, and don’t try to pray as you can’t ’. It was he, too, who said that a good director is like a nurse who teaches children how to walk alone. So we should expect a director not to put us in a straitjacket of certain methods of prayer, but to give encouragement and to suggest possibilities. He is there to help remove obstacles of misunderstanding or illusion, and to grapple with the difficulties which arise. For this to happen, it is important for people to try to pin-point their difficulties, and then to ask specifically for help.

4. Consultation on a pattern or rule of life. Christians who live in religious communities have a pattern of life more or less arranged for them. Christians who live ‘ in the world ’ have no such support, and may find great strength in having a simple, basic pattern for daily life, especially concerning the time given to prayer. But this so-called rule of life needs to be carefully adapted to each person’s situation, and revised from time to time. It needs to be watched, too, because it may change by misuse from being a valuable support into being a deadly piece of legalism, particularly with anyone who has a tendency to try to justify their own existence by the output they can produce.

Living an ordered life under the yoke of Christ is a discipline that brings joy. Leading an over-burdened existence under a weight of graceless rule-keeping crushes the spirit. It is the business of spiritual direction to enable people to recognise in themselves the difference between these two ways of living. When we see the difference, we can be helped to shake free from the servile way, and find the joyful way.

5. The opening of our grief. What is the connexion between spiritual direction and the confession of sins ? Some people who seek direction from a priest nearly always make a sacramental confession on the same occasion. Others do not feel bound to do so as a matter of course, but as need arises. The Book of Common Prayer describes a ministry in which counsel and absolution go closely together, and the passage provides a useful guideline. It appears in the Order of the Holy Communion, in the first Exhortation that may be read by the priest, and it says : ‘ . . . if there be any of you who by this means (that is, a private self-examination and confession to God) cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him



come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief ; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice '.

' To open his grief ' in this context refers primarily to a way of dealing with sin and the bad conscience it brings. But we may extend its meaning to include anything which troubles us, morally or emotionally or intellectually. Grief can be of many kinds, and any kind may be ' opened ' in spiritual direction. This does not imply that the director is there to supply answers like an oracle. He is more like a sounding-board, or an objective point of reference outside ourselves. Those who open their grief with a listening heart on their side as well as the director's, will find that again and again they will ' hear ' God's voice—that God can seek and find and speak to them, sometimes through the director's words, and sometimes in spite of his words.

6. The discernment of spirits. How can we be sure that a spiritual experience, such as an inner prompting, is from God and not from some sick part of ourselves ? We should expect help here from direction, not so much in providing us with theoretical answers, as in assisting us in the checking of the evidence in our particular situation. We may be only dimly aware that the forces of the divine and the demonic are at work in the events of everyday life. It helps if this awareness is sharpened. The demonic—that is to say, the destructive, distorting and parasitic elements around us and within us—may parade as the divine. ' The enemy of our human nature ', as S. Ignatius Loyola named evil, tempts us under the appearance of good. Behind the appearance is hollowness.

Direction may be able to help us in detecting one of the surest signs that a prompting or line of thought is not from God, which is that it whips up over-anxiety, increases confusion, and robs us of peace and joy. God is a God of order : the demonic specializes in chaos. ' It is the way of the evil spirit to cause anxiety and sadness, and to place obstacles in the way, disquieting the soul by false reasonings, in order to stop its progress. It is the property of the good spirit to give courage and strength, consolation . . . and peace '. (Ignatian Exercises, Rules for the discernment of spirits).

It is in the application of principles like these that direction can help, but faith would not be faith unless it had to operate within some

continuing uncertainty on the surface of our minds. We shall need to pray in full reliance upon the Father that the Holy Spirit will give us the ability to distinguish true spirits from false, of which S. Paul writes in I Corinthians 12.

### III. *What should our attitude to spiritual direction be ?*

The general attitude has already been suggested, but in particular the approach needs to be by careful preparation. There needs to be a real effort, surrounded by trusting prayer, to get as far as we can by ourselves in finding solutions. Then, admitting defeat or some persistent perplexity, it helps to write down our remaining questions. Next, it may be an advantage to draw up an agenda for use at the time of direction—nothing elaborate, but some headings arranged in order of priorities which will help us to remember what it is that we decided, in time of preparation, to raise. Some people find it a help to make notes at the time of direction ; others would find this distracting. Most would gain by writing down afterwards a summary of the ‘ directions ’ which seemed to emerge. Spiritual direction is not spiritual dictation. It does not impose itself. Yet through it the Spirit does leave people with a renewed sense of direction.

Is there a place for obedience in spiritual direction ? Yes, but it is not to be confused with the vow of obedience taken in a Religious Community. A better comparison would be with the kind of obedience we may give to a doctor whom we consult about our health. There would not be much point in continuing to consult him, if we disregarded everything he said. Further, there are times in life, as in states of great moral weakness or severe scrupulosity, when obedience may be particularly necessary, if we are to be rescued from the grip of our sickness.

Obedience to Christ is what matters supremely. This can be assisted by training in discernment.

I began these notes by describing spiritual direction as an enabling ministry. To enable is to empower people with the means to achieve. The right use of spiritual direction can empower us to respond to the touch of the Spirit, and to be more open to receive his gift of ‘ comfort, life and fire of love ’.

## ***Books Received***

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges the receipt of the following publications, and it is hoped that a review will be published in a future edition.

**Your God ?**, by Cardinal Suenens, D.L.T. ; **Am I running with you God ?**, by Malcolm Boyd, S.P.C.K. ; **Quest of the Absolute**, edited by J. G. Weber, Mowbray ; **Unseen Warfare**, by Lorenzo Scupoli, Mowbray ; **On Preaching**, by Donald Coggan, S.P.C.K. ; **The World is a Wedding**, by A. M. Allchin, D.L.T. ; **Encountering Myself**, by Harry Cargas, S.P.C.K. ; **Peace at the Last**, by Norman Autton, S.P.C.K. ; **More Like Christ**, by A. J. McCallen, Collins ; **The Humility of God**, by John Macquarrie, S.C.M. Press ; **The Body at Prayer**, by H. Caffarel, S.P.C.K. ; **Silent Prayers for the Long Day**, by Giles and Melville Harcourt, Collins ; **When You Pray**, by Sister Patricia C.S.P. and John Gilling, D.L.T. ; **Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages**, by J. V. Fleming, Franciscan Herald Press (Chicago) ; **The Use and Abuse of the Bible**, by Dennis Nineham, S.P.C.K. ; **Consider your Call**, by Daniel Rees O.S.B. and Others, S.P.C.K. ; **A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1977**, by Loraine Gordon and Others, S.A. Institute of Race Relations ; **Bonhoeffer, True Patriot**, by Mary Bosanquet, Mowbray ; **The Book of the Lover and the Beloved**, by Ramon Lull, Sheldon Press ; **The Rhine Flows into the Tiber**, by Ralph M. Wiltgen S.B.D., Augustine ; **Follow Me**, by Rene Voillaume, D.L.T. ; **A Theology of Auschwitz**, by Ulrich Simon, S.P.C.K. ; **Christian Beliefs about Life After Death**, by Paul Badham, S.P.C.K. ; **Faith in Christ**, by Robin Gill, Mowbray ; **Matthew : A Commentary**, by Jack Dean Kingsbury, S.P.C.K. ; **A Guide to I Corinthians**, by John Hargreaves, S.P.C.K. ; **Journey into Christ**, by Alan W. Jones, S.P.C.K. ; **The Love of Learning and the Desire for God**, by Jean Leclercq O.S.B., S.P.C.K. ; **The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church**, by S. G. F. Brandon, S.P.C.K. ; **A History of the Parish and People Movement**, by Peter J. Jagger, Faith Press ; **Intercessions at Holy Communion**, by Colin Semper, Mowbray ; **The End of an Era (Africa and the Missionary)**, by Elliott Kendall, S.P.C.K. ; **Black Theology, Black Power**, by Allan Aubrey Boesak, Mowbray ; **Christ Present and Coming**, by Rudolph Schnackenburg, S.P.C.K. ; **Made in Heaven**, by Carlo Carretto, D.L.T. ; **Glory Under Your Feet**, by Michael Marshall, D.L.T. ; **The Eucharist**, by Michael Perham, Alcuin Club/S.P.C.K. ; **Charismatic Renewal**, edited by Edward D. O'Connor, S.P.C.K.



## Books

### The Christmas Stories

**The Birth of the Messiah.** By Raymond E. Brown S.S.

Geoffrey Chapman, 1977, 594 pp., £9.50.

This book claims to be a commentary on the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke, and that means only the first two chapters in each gospel. It is set out in exactly the same format as the *Anchor Bible*, which is a well known American series, with translation, notes and comment on each section following a comprehensive general introduction. But it is really much more than a commentary. For it is a book which comes to grips with one of the most difficult problems for Christians today. We all love, and we are all inspired by, the Christmas stories. But how far are they really true? It is not simply that the miracle of virgin birth is hard for many of us to accept. Nor is it simply that these stories seem to be legendary and uncomfortably similar to the legends that have grown up around the birth and childhood of many famous people of the world. But, even if we take them at their face value, they raise awkward questions (often put to us with devastating clarity by kindergarten children) about why all these wonderful things are completely forgotten when Jesus grows up. For many people the heart-rending thing about Christmas is, not just that it has become so commercialised and secularised, but that behind the real loveliness of it as a great Christian festival there is a gnawing doubt.

Father Brown's response to this dilemma is to subject the gospel narratives to the most searching literary analysis. He argues that it is not only impossible, but also a false track, to try to discover the 'actual facts'. Matthew and Luke had very little in the way of facts to go on. In so far as it is possible

to go behind them and detect the sources of their information, they were working on meagre and mutually contradictory traditions. The virginal conception is in fact the only point on which Matthew and Luke agree, and of course the fact that the birth took place at Bethlehem. Moreover both evangelists accept the claim that Jesus was a descendant of David (mentioned by Paul in Rom. 1: 3), which may have something to do with the Bethlehem tradition. In other respects their accounts are poles apart. The age-old suggestion that Matthew is dependent on the memories of Joseph and Luke on those of Mary is not very cogent—one would have expected more agreement between the memories of husband and wife!

If, then, facts remain few and unprovable, the right track is to trace what the evangelists were actually doing. And here light suddenly bursts on our darkness. Each in his own way, they were writing *introductions* to the gospel. They used Old Testament prophecies (Matthew) or Old Testament styling (Luke) to effect the *transition* from the old covenant to the new. They built up the nativity traditions to give to the reader *anticipations* of the full faith which can really only be reached at the *end* of the story in the resurrection. From the point of view of resurrection faith, Jesus the prophet of Nazareth presents a *paradox*, and nowhere is this more appealing than in the lowliness of his birth. The nativity traditions are a response to a combination of devotion and curiosity, and however much or however little historic fact is contained in them, it is their *symbolical* importance

which explains the attention which they have received from Matthew and Luke. And because these stories anticipate the full revelation, all the characters (at any rate in Luke) behave as if they were living the *joyful experience of the primitive church*. The Christian reader is expected to be dazzled by their meaning, to allow his imagination to be stimulated, and to rejoice in the knowledge (derived from the *rest* of the gospel) that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour.

This argument shines through a most thorough and painstaking study. Every conceivable theory is examined, and all the arguments are most carefully weighed. Father Brown is conscious that many of his fellow Roman Catholics (not to mention Anglicans) will find his approach too sharp a break with tradition to be easily accepted. His sensitive understanding of our difficulties is not the least of the merits of this truly remarkable book.

BARNABAS S.S.F.

## Mother Teresa of Calcutta

*We do it for Jesus.* By E. Le Joly.

Darton, Longman and Todd, £2.95.

This book about Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity does not aim to be a biography, nor to give a full history of the Missionaries of Charity. It describes the beginnings, the aims and the spirit of the Sisters, and is written by one who is supremely well qualified to do this. Father Le Joly was for twenty years their spiritual director.

Sometimes famous people suffer at the hands of their biographers who superimpose too much of themselves, but this book is based largely on Mother Teresa's own words in public or in private conversations with Father Le Joly. Thus we are given a vivid portrayal of Mother Teresa and her spirituality from her own lips. It is especially gratifying to note that S. Francis has so much inspired her, and one could not but see her as a twentieth century female S. Francis in her intensely personal love for Our Lord and her serving Him in the poor, the abandoned and the deprived.

Mother Teresa is very clear as to what her Sisters are to be. 'We are first of all religious; we are not social workers, not teachers, not nurses or doctors, we are religious Sisters. We serve Jesus in

the poor'. Her deep spirituality and sanctity shine out on every page of this book, but also we see her immense practicality and vigorous devotion to detail. She is no misty mystic but intensely human and with a rich sense of humour.

The chapter entitled 'Training the Sisters' will be of great value to any who have the care of novices. Another chapter deals with the founding of the Missionary Brothers under the leadership of the Australian Jesuit, Brother Andrew. The breadth of Mother Teresa's vision can be seen in her development of co-workers, now numbering forty thousand and these include aged, crippled and suffering people who offer their sufferings for the Sisters and the poor. So vital does she see the power of prayer that she has arranged that all the houses of her Missionaries of Charity should be adopted spiritually by one or several convents of contemplative nuns, to their mutual advantage. It is perhaps not so well known that she has founded in America the Sisters of the Word who are contemplatives yet daily for two hours they go out and speak of Jesus.

It is a little unfortunate that there

should be so many printer's errors in this book, particularly the one which speaks of the 'Superior General of the Millionaries of Charity' ! But this does not detract from the fact that countless

people reading this book will be able to absorb something of the spirituality of Mother Teresa in her total surrender, loving trust and cheerfulness.

GEOFFREY S.S.F.

## Christ the Liberator

**God of the Oppressed.** *By J. H. Cone.* S.P.C.K., 280 pp., Paperback, £3.95.

This is a powerful example of Black Theology by the Professor of Theology at the Union Theological Seminary, New York. Cone says, 'It is a theologian's personal history, in a particular socio-political setting, that serves as the most important factor in shaping the methodology and content of his or her theological perspective'.

Here he makes a theology and an ethics out of the twin sources of experience and scripture, both of which bear witness to Christ. Cone says that Christ is the liberator, eternally present with the oppressed, so black experience is a source of theology ; and, 'The hermeneutical principle for an exegesis of the Scriptures is the revelation of God in Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed from social oppression and to political struggle, wherein the poor recognise that their fight against poverty and injustice is not only consistent with

the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ'.

He demonstrates that God is the God of the oppressed : 'If God had chosen as his holy nation the Egyptian slave-masters instead of the Israelite slaves, then a completely different kind of God would have been revealed'. Jesus' life is treated in some detail ; the teachings of John and Paul are given less attention.

Repeatedly Cone points out ways in which White Theology is conditioned by the desire to preserve the privileges of the powerful classes, from which white theologians come. Whilst this is valid, he is given to over generalisations. His condemnation is too stark. Also in pitting White Christianity against Black Christianity, the distinctions are too sharp. This is a valuable book which shatters our presuppositions. It deserves to be widely read. PATRICK SOOKDEHO.

## The Way of Praise

**On the Psalms.** *By Thomas Merton.* Sheldon Press, 1977.

This is a timely reprint of a pamphlet first published in this country in 1957. In it Merton commends the Psalms for use in both public worship and private prayer. There is a somewhat dated section in which he justifies this by quoting from pre-Vatican II Papal Documents. He has there one gorgeous sentence, highlighting the change which has come about in the devotional climate of Roman Catholic Sisterhoods : 'One

might also add that the starvation rations which go to make up the public prayers of some communities of religious sisters in the active life might profitably be strengthened by the addition of an occasional Psalm'. But Merton goes further, and commends the use of psalms in family prayers—a custom which, alas, has almost disappeared.

Nevertheless, there is much in this little work of enduring value, which



needs to be repeated and heard. Merton puts before us the great tradition of the Church loving and praying the Psalms. He quotes S. Augustine : ' The best way is to seek the way of praise in the Scriptures of God '. Thus it is the Psalm above all which will establish us in God and unite us to Christ. They are to be loved because in them the Church sings of her experience of God, and through them she develops the mind of Christ. Man needs to praise God in order to fulfil his being. The praise of the Psalms is real because they are the songs of those who knew who God was and what he had done for his people. The Psalms will become real for us, Merton suggests, as we recognise in them our own experiences of sorrow and joy, fear and peace, through the discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ

typified by David.

Merton recommends the slow meditative reading of the Psalms, avoiding the rush which is so common in saying the Office ; to this I would add my own testimony.

This is not a book to answer the problems which the Psalms present, but it introduces and encourages us to enter into the loving experience of the Church at prayer through the ages. It should be read by those setting out to use the Psalms in their worship and prayer. For the sceptics there are these penetrating words : ' It is quite possible that our lack of interest in the Psalms conceals a secret lack of interest in God. For if we have no real interest in praising him, it shows that we have never realised who he is '.

HAROLD S.S.F.

## New Christians

' Inside Out ' : A Handbook for Youth Leaders.

*Edited by Michael Eastman.* Falcon and Frontier Youth Trust, £1.15.

Not so much ' a handbook for youth leaders ' ( as it claims ), but more a contribution to the debate about the Church, born out of concern for our ministry to young people and the task of making new Christians. The majority of the twelve contributors are or have been youth workers and, as may be expected, there are valuable insights and useful suggestions for others in the same field.

Youth work cannot be seen in isolation : certainly not from community activity ( page 66 ) or from main stream church life ( ' setting up youth clubs designed to keep young people out of the way, which is common reason for creating church youth groups ' ( page 95 ) will not do ). In fact we all share responsibility for helping young people to grow for ' inter-action with adults

who are themselves mature is essential ' ( page 97 ).

Perhaps above all, what kind of church do we wish new Christians ( and not all are *young* ) to be welcomed into ? The fact is that ' many church people find it hard to conceive that large numbers of young people grow up without any experience of church life ' ( page 9 ). Are we then to be happy with alternative church structures springing up ( page 100 ) simply because too many new Christians without the traditional background, established forms of worship are meaningless, or even a denial of their Christianity ( pages 100—7 ) ?

An incisive and crisp contribution examines renewal movements, changes in society, modern methods of communication, relevance and links

hope in our time with urgency. We need 'the enthusiasm and excitement that there was in the early church' (page 115). A strong plea by one contributor for 'aims before programming' is a reminder to the whole church 'My goal is to present each person mature in Christ, able to express and enjoy God' (page 28). Not just the young I suspect!

Other contributors cover offerings on liturgy, work with the unattached (don't miss the buscotheque!), urbanisation and industrial technology, identity and authority.

Sadly too many members of our churches look to young people with a futuristic eye (the 'church of tomorrow'). Yet it must be on the present that we focus, by sharpening our awareness of the contribution of the young and new Christians. It means looking at church structures and our responsibilities for outreach—to that debate, 'Inside Out' makes a very useful contribution.

VICTOR JOHN S.S.F.,

*Novice.*

## Preaching

**New Preaching from the New Testament.** *By D. W. Cleverley Ford.*

Mowbrays, 114 pp., £2.50.

**Preaching through the Christian Year : Sermon Outlines for the Seasons of the Church's Year.** *By Fenton Morley.* Mowbrays, 176 pp., £2.50.

Both books offer reassurance to those who have lost confidence in preaching as a means of declaring the Gospel in our day. Fenton Morley suggests that the sermon is coming back into its own as a medium of teaching, whereas Cleverley Ford contends that, despite apparent wastefulness, (cp. The Parable of the Sower) 'preaching is not . . . to be excused from the Christian ministry'. However, he adds that it is 'part, but only a part, of the pastoral office' (page 36). While noting his conviction that preaching remains important, the last comment is at least provocative for those of us who are not parochially based, and for those who maintain the place of the evangelist in today's setting.

It is difficult to be unimpressed with Cleverley Ford's talent and ability as a preacher. Even through the medium of book-form, a conviction, freshness and originality break through. In order to prevent us being misled by the title, the author makes the point, 'the only sense in which new preaching from the New Testament can be new, is that it is fresh

preaching'. There is no disputing the fact that this volume is purely a collection of New Testament sermons (to sequel an Old Testament counterpart), even if by a distinguished preacher of our time.

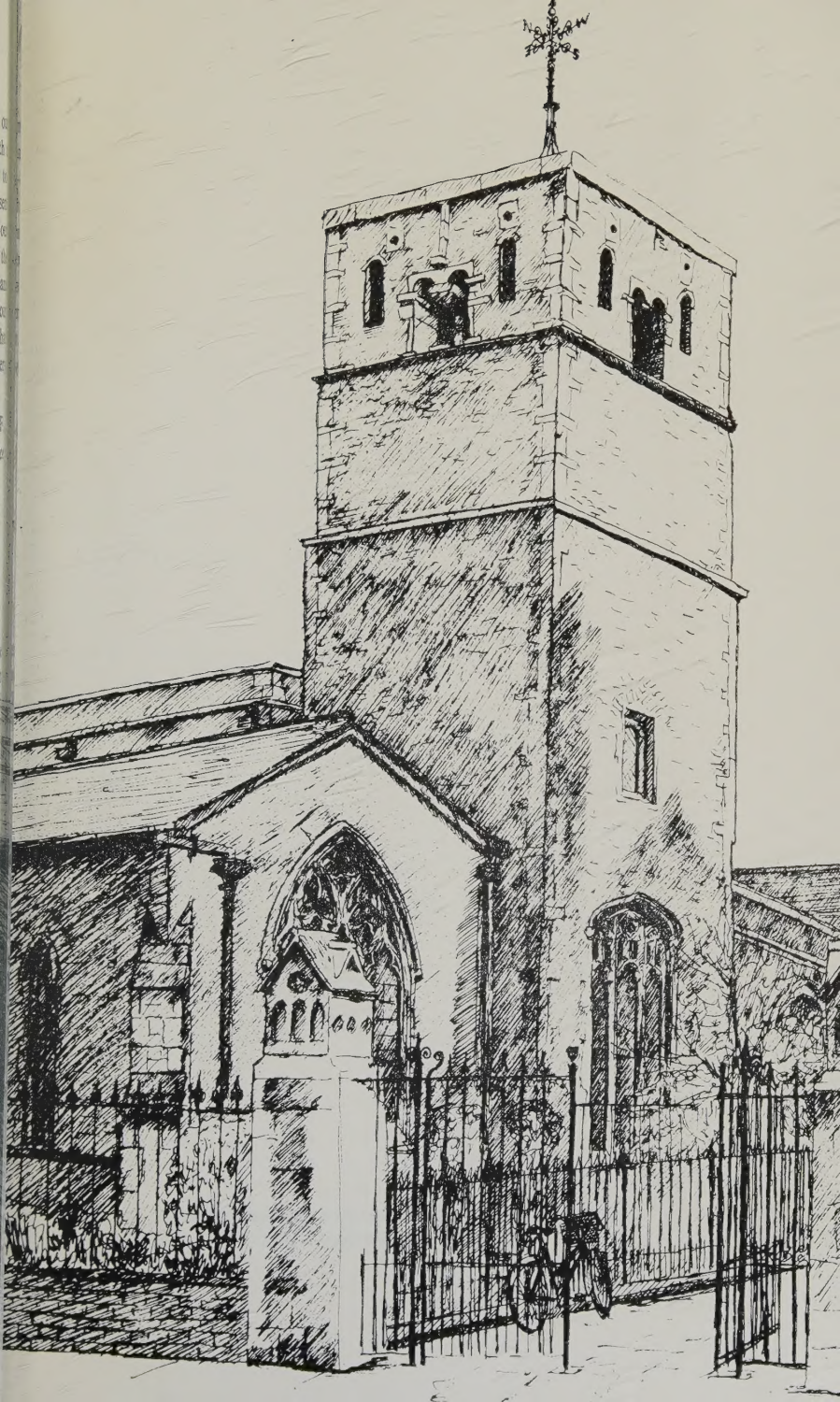
Fenton Morley's sermon outlines offer a more convincing structure, following on the seasons of the church's year. Cleverley Ford, as the series editor, suggests in the introduction that one reason why this book will be useful to so many preachers is because there is nothing peculiar or odd about the material . . . nothing any normal preacher would not use himself. It may well be that the Dean is better heard than read—the impression is heavy and lacking in a vitality to inspire other preachers (rather than hearers).

Nevertheless, here are two offerings to add to the growing list of aids available to the preacher by men who believe in the value of the sermon, and the importance of the Bible.

VICTOR JOHN S.S.F.,

*Novice.*







ST. BENET'S, CAMBRIDGE, at which the brethren have  
ministered for over thirty years.